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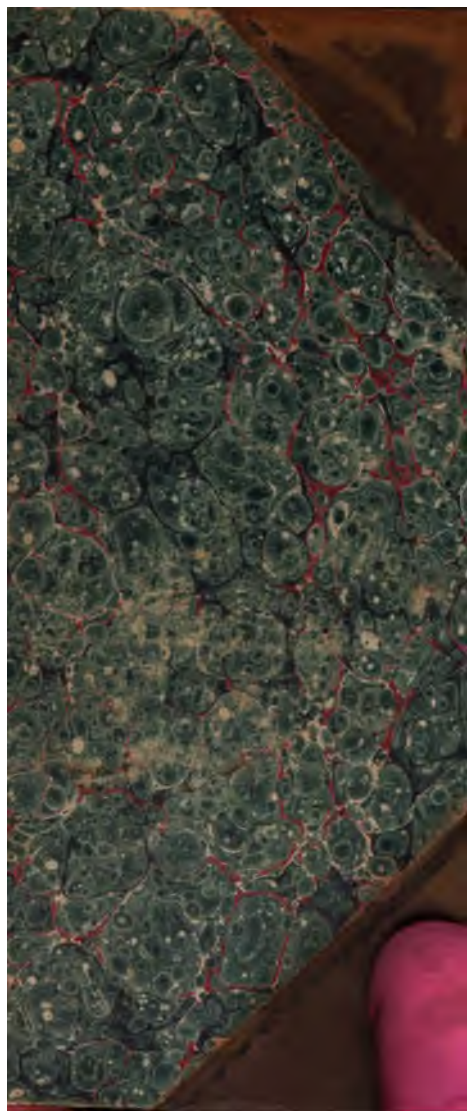
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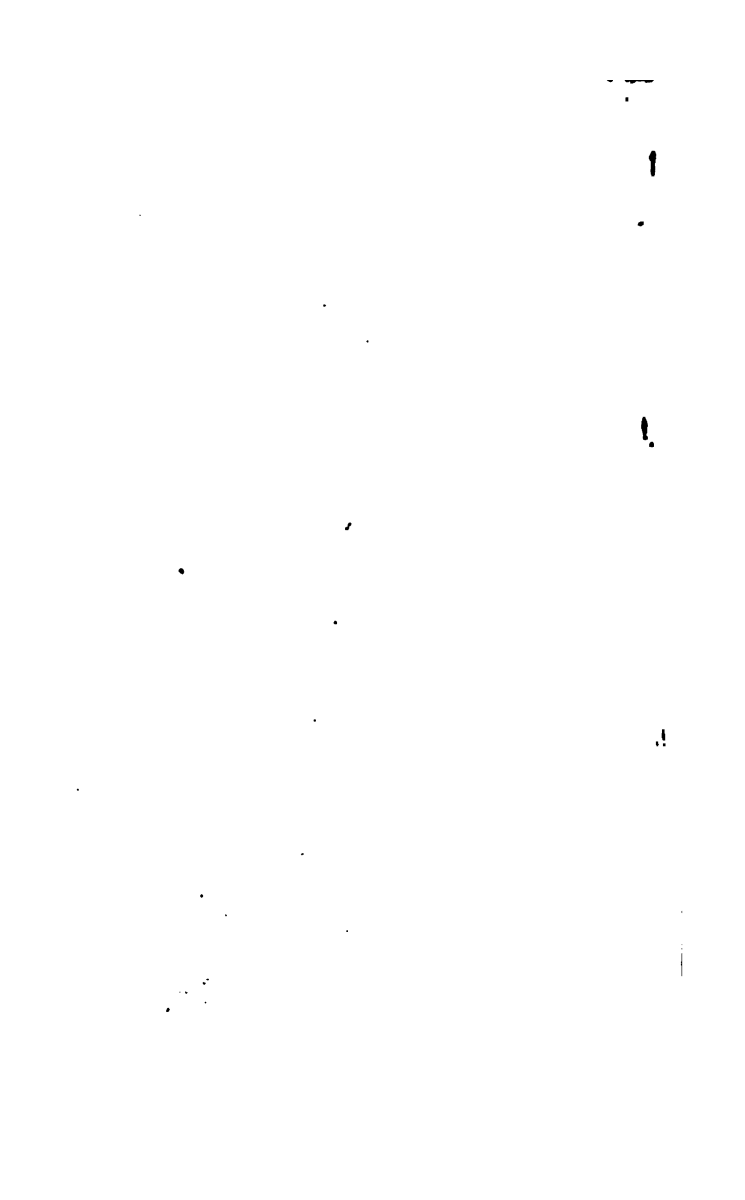


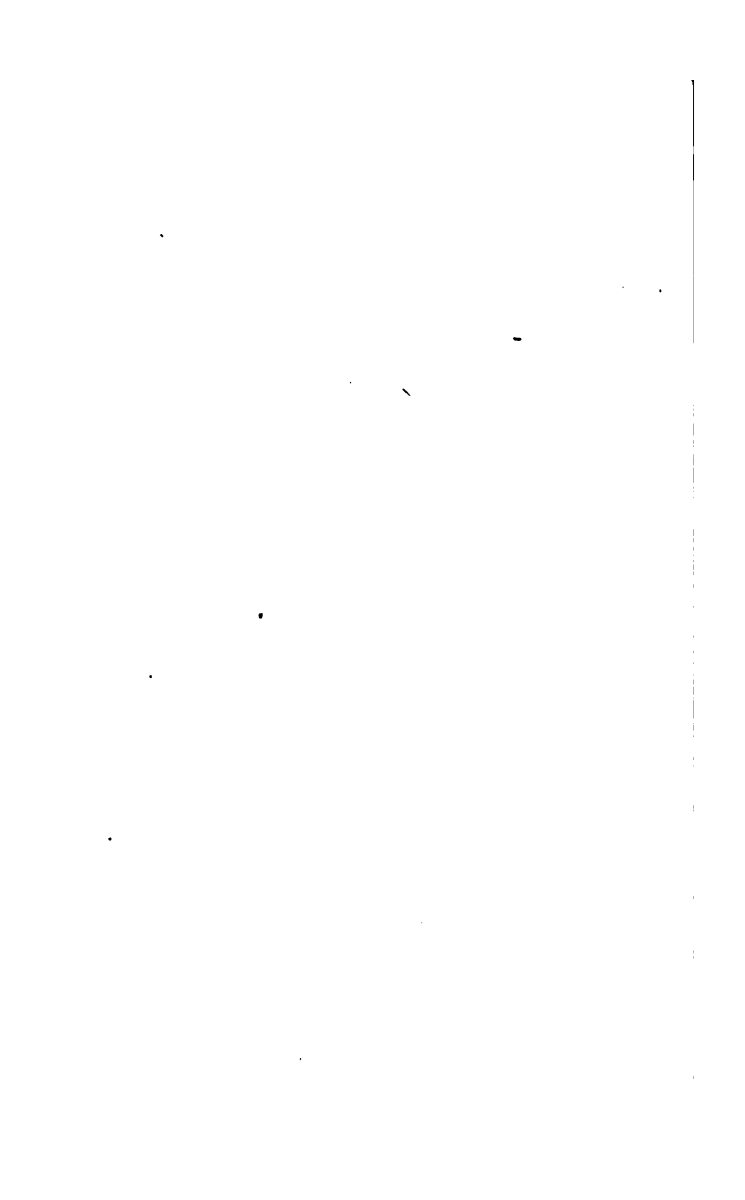
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**THE HISTORY OF JONAH.**

**L. B. SEELEY AND SONS, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.**





**FRONTISPIECE.**



# **THE HISTORY OF JONAH,**

**FOR**

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH,**

**DESIGNED ALSO AS AN AID TO FAMILIAR BIBLICAL  
EXPOSITION, IN FAMILIES, SUNDAY SCHOOLS,  
AND BIBLE CLASSES.**

**BY THE REV. T. H. GALLAUDET,  
LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE AMERICAN ASYLUM FOR THE  
DEAF AND DUMB.**

**WITH ENGRAVINGS.**

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## PREFACE.

It is the design of the Author, in this book, to make the history of Jonah the ground-work of a series of illustrations and practical remarks, growing out of the incidents which it records. In doing this, the explanation of not a few difficult topics in the religious instruction of children and youth, is attempted, by that *slow and patient analysis*, so necessary in communicating truth to their minds. Among these topics are—*the omniscience of God—prophecy—sacrifices—objections to the Bible,—miracles,—limits of human reason,—God's repenting and being angry,—and others of a similar nature.*

In addition to this, the author has endeavoured to render the difficult parts of this portion of scripture intelligible to the youthful mind, and throughout the whole to interweave with the narrative such *practical views of duty*, as will tend, under the blessing of God, to promote *early and active piety* in the youthful heart.

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He has aimed to call into exercise *the reflecting and reasoning powers* of the young reader,

in a style of as great plainness and simplicity as the nature of the subject would permit.

Are not *some such* books needed in the department of religious education? Entertainment is important, and even fiction, to some extent, allowable, in order to interest youth, and induce habits of attention in reading. But books of this description already abound. Whether one of a more serious cast, having indeed much that is interesting in its narrative, but demanding also a good share of sober and close thinking, will be appreciated by the religious public—it is for that public to decide.

In conclusion, the author begs leave to suggest, whether in such Sunday Schools as would admit of the arrangement, the chapters might not be read in succession, as lectures on this portion of the Sacred Scriptures, so aptly styled by the excellent commentator, Henry, *milk for babes*.

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THE  
HISTORY OF JONAH.

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CHAPTER I.

Omniscience of God.—Meaning of the word *prophet*.—Schools of the prophets among the Jews.

ALMOST every child has heard about Jonah, and the great fish that swallowed him up, which we read of in the Bible.

I am going to write the history of Jonah, and I shall try to do it in such a way, that my young readers may understand it, and learn something good from it.

All the histories in the Bible were written to teach us good things, and to show us how we must love and obey God, that we may go to heaven when we die, and be happy there for ever.

It was God who told good men how to write

see things often in a dream ; or he can cause the person *to think* what is to happen, and *to know* certainly that it will happen ; or he can do all this in some *other way* which we cannot understand, just as God does a great many wonderful things which we cannot understand. For the wisest man does not understand how it is that God makes the corn grow out of some few little seeds that are put into the ground ; or how the food that you eat is turned into flesh, and blood, and hard bone, and helps you to live, and to grow up to be men and women.

Now if God in some way should tell or show a person something which is to happen, and how it is to happen, and when it is to happen, or cause him to think about it, and know about it certainly, so as not to be mistaken in the least ; that person would *foreknow* the thing which is to happen, or he would have the foreknowledge of it ; and if this person should tell other people that the thing would certainly happen in such a way, and at such a time, he would be a *prophet* ; he would *foretell*, or *prophecy*, the thing which was to happen : and when it did happen exactly as he had prophesied, the people would say that he was a true prophet.

There are no such prophets now ; God does not think it best that there should be ; but a great many years ago there were such prophets among the Jews, and God made known to them

things that were to happen, which they told the people long before they did happen.

When you grow older you will understand more about this, and you will read the prophecies in the Bible, and wonder to see how exactly the prophets foretold what afterwards came to pass.


The exact coming to pass, or, what means the same thing, *the fulfilment* of these prophecies, shows us that the Bible is true, and that God really told good men how to write it ; for if God had not given them the foreknowledge of what was to happen, how could they have foretold or prophesied it ? The prophecies which they wrote have come to pass, and therefore we know that these prophecies came from God himself ; and so we believe that the Bible, which contains these prophecies, came from God himself, and that he told good men how to write it.

The prophets among the Jews, were also teachers of the people, and explained to them what God wished them to be taught about himself, and what he wished them to believe and to do. They were like the clergymen, or ministers, who now preach to the people, only those who preach now, learn from *the Bible alone*, what God wishes them to say to the people, but the prophets were often taught by God himself, what he wished to be told to the Jews ; and the Jews were bound to believe and obey the things told them by the prophets, just as much

as if they had heard God himself speaking to them from heaven.

The prophets among the Jews had great power. The kings often used to ask them what it was best to do, and followed their advice. Nathan the prophet went to King David, and was not afraid to reprove him very severely for his wickedness. They were poor men, and often worked very hard: their dress was quite plain. Elijah, one of the prophets, was clothed with skins, and wore a leather girdle round his body. Their food, too, was plain. The presents which the people gave them, were only bread, fruits, and honey. When Elisha, another of the prophets, was about to prepare food for a number of young men whom he taught, and some of whom were to be prophets, he sent a man out into the field to gather herbs to boil. The man found some gourds on a wild vine, and brought them, and put them into the pot, and, with some meal, a kind of soup was made, of which they all ate. And, when Elijah was about to go on a long journey, an angel gave him only bread and water to strengthen him. Thus you see, these good men were *temperate in all things*; and if we act wisely, we shall be temperate also.

Among the Jews, there were *schools of the prophets*, where young men were taught about God and his laws. They were also taught



to sing psalms, and to play on musical instruments ; for the prophets sometimes prophesied, playing on harps, and other kinds of musical instruments.

The governor and teacher of each of these schools, was an aged and wise prophet, who was called *the father*, and the young men were called *the sons of the prophets* ; and they lived together in one house, and ate together at the same table.

From among these sons of the prophets, God chose some, after they had been at the schools long enough to become prophets themselves ; to tell the kings and the people what God wished to have them do, and to foretell things that were to come to pass.

Fathers and mothers among the Jews, who loved and obeyed God, were very glad to have their sons go to these schools, where they could receive such excellent instruction and advice from the old prophets. And many of these young men must have felt that it was good for them to be there.

Think, my dear children, how good God is in providing schools for you, and especially the Sunday Schools, in which you can be taught about God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and the Bible ; and what you must believe, and feel, and do, that you may grow up to do good, and be useful in this world, and to be perfectly good and happy in heaven for ever.

## CHAPTER II.

Birth place of Jonah.—His call to go to Nineveh.—Description of the city.—Its great wickedness.—The danger of children becoming wicked, as the people of Nineveh were.

THE reason why I have said so much about the prophets among the Jews is, that my young readers may understand the better who Jonah was, whose history I am going to tell them. For Jonah was a *prophet*, and probably, when a young man, lived for some time at one of these schools of the prophets which I have described.

The name of Jonah's father was Amittai. We do not know any thing about him, or his family, only that they lived at Gath-hepher, a small town in Galilee. Galilee was that part of Palestine, in which Jesus Christ lived while he was growing up; and Nazareth, the town where he lived with his mother Mary and her husband Joseph, was but a few miles from Gath-hepher, the birth-place of Jonah.

You must find out these places on a map of Palestine, and then you will understand better where they were.

The first place in the Bible in which we read about Jonah, is in the fourteenth chapter of the

second book of Kings, at the twenty-fifth verse. There we find that God had spoken to the Israelites by his prophet Jonah, and told them that they should drive their enemies back who had taken some of their country from them, and that they should have their own country again, as large as it was before. This prophecy of Jonah was fulfilled by Jeroboam, (the second of that name,) who was king of Israel at the time when Jonah lived. For he drove back the enemies of his people, and took from them the country which they had taken from the Israelites, just as Jonah had foretold. This happened about eight hundred years before Jesus Christ was born. Forty years before, not far from the same time, God called Jonah, and said to him, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me." And now, the history which I am going to tell you, begins.

If you will look at the eleventh verse of the tenth chapter of Genesis, you will see that Nineveh was built by Ashur, one of the sons of Shem. Shem was a son of Noah, so that it was built, (that is, the first houses in it were built,) not many years after the deluge.

It was by the side of a large river called the Tigris. Ask some one to show you this river on the map, and you will see that it is in Asia, a part of the world which is a great way from



England, that part of the world in which you live. It is not known exactly where this great city stood, for it is all destroyed, as it was foretold by one of the prophets it would be.

Nineveh stood on a large plain, and high walls were built all around it. It was fifty or sixty miles round the city, but the place within the walls was not all filled up with houses. There was a great deal of room for gardens and for fields, in which many cattle fed. The walls, it is said, were one hundred feet high, and so broad, that three chariots could go along-side of each other on the top of them. And on different parts of the walls were towers, in which soldiers were placed to defend the city. The number of these towers is said to have been fifteen hundred, and their height two hundred feet. Nineveh then was a very strong, as well as large city, and it is thought that it contained at least five hundred thousand people.

The people to whom Nineveh belonged, were called *Assyrians*, and their country was called *Assyria*. It was a great country, and they were a very powerful people; they had large armies, and used to go and fight other people, many of whom they conquered, and took their country from them, and took possession of it.

One of their kings whose name was Ninus, is said to have had a very great army indeed. Perhaps it is not exactly true: (for those who wrote

about what happened a great many, many years ago, sometimes tell things which are not exactly true;) but it is said that the army of Ninus contained one million and seven hundred thousand soldiers who marched on foot, and two hundred and ten thousand who rode on horses, and ten thousand six hundred chariots filled with armed men.

Then there was a queen Semiramis, the wife of Ninus, who, after his death, made Nineveh much more beautiful and splendid; she ordered large lakes to be dug, and palaces to be built, and temples, (or churches, in which the false gods were worshipped,) to be erected, and walls to be raised.

It was a long time after this that Jonah lived, and it is not known who the king of Nineveh was, when Jonah was sent to preach against that city. But we know that it was a very wicked king, and that the people were very wicked people.

The Bible does not tell us all the different ways in which the king and people of Nineveh were so wicked. But their wickedness must have been very great. One of the other prophets, Nahum, who foretold the entire destruction of Nineveh, speaks of it as a very wicked city. He wrote, indeed, some time after Jonah lived, but doubtless, the kinds of wickedness of which he speaks, had long prevailed

there. He calls it *a bloody city*, which means, that the people often made war upon others, without any reason for doing so, and killed a great many; so that it was *a city of murderers*, like Cain, who, you recollect, was the first murderer, and killed his own brother in great anger; and it is very probable, that they often quarrelled and fought among themselves, and killed each other, and that this was another reason why Nahum called it a bloody city.

He says, too, that it was *all full of lies*. The people did not speak the truth. They told falsehoods to other people who did business with them, and to each other. When they bought and sold things, they deceived and cheated, and tried to buy things for less than they were worth, and to sell them for more than they were worth. They promised to do things, and did not keep their promise; they said false things about each other, and told falsehoods in a great many different ways; so that it was also *a city of liars*.

Nahum says again, that Nineveh was *all full of robbery*. The people stole from each other; they did this often in the night, breaking into each other's houses, and carrying off things by force, and sometimes killing the people that lived in the house, if they made any resistance; and besides this, the people of Nineveh would go out of the city, and attack travellers, and

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rob, and sometimes murder them; and their armies would make war on other people, and fight and destroy them, and burn down their towns and cities, on purpose to get their money, and goods, and cattle; so that Nineveh was a *city of robbers*.

It was also, as the prophet Nahum says, a city, *the people of which worshipped idols*. An idol, you know is something usually in the shape of a man or beast, made of gold, or silver, or brass, or wood, or stone, which the people who make it, call a god. There are parts of the world now, especially in India, where the people have idols, and build large temples or churches for them, and have a great many priests, or ministers of the idols to wait upon them. They pretend to give them food to eat, and pray to them, and sing hymns to them, and draw them about on great wheels, in a kind of waggon called a car. Every year, hundreds and thousands of people come from a great distance, and from a great many different places, to worship these idols; and the priests and the people say and do a great many very wicked things, which are so wicked that I cannot tell you about them. And many people, while the men are drawing the idols in the cars, throw themselves down on the ground before the heavy wheels, which soon roll over them, and crush them to death. They are so foolish as to think, that in this way they

can get all their sins forgiven, and go to heaven.

I do not know exactly what kind of idols the people of Nineveh worshipped, nor how they worshipped them. But they did so, and in a very foolish and wicked way. They knew better than to do so, for they must have known that idols cannot see, or hear, or understand, or help any body. And they must have known too, that idols could not have made the sun, moon, and stars, and the world, and all the people, and animals, and things that are in it; but that God must have made them, and that he was the God whom they should worship. And they must have known that the things which they said and did while worshipping their idols, were very foolish and wicked.

Besides all this, the people of Nineveh tried to make other people worship these idols, and to come to Nineveh to worship them, and to bring gold, and silver, and goods, and other valuable things with them, some of which to give to the idols. In this way they led other people to be wicked like themselves, and hoped to make their city great, rich, and powerful, so that Nineveh was a *city of idolaters*.

No doubt, all that I have mentioned was but a small part of the wickedness of the people of Nineveh, for people who are murderers, and liars, and robbers, and idolaters, we may be sure,

will be very, very wicked in a great many other different ways.

Their wickedness was so great, that God said, *it had come up before him*. It had risen, as it were to the heavens, as dark smoke rises from a great fire. It had risen to the place where God is, to his very throne, and had come before him, so that he saw it in all its greatness, and saw that it was time for him to punish the people of Nineveh very severely, if they did not repent.

You read in the Bible how often God has punished wicked people, who kept on in their wickedness and did not repent. He destroyed, you remember, all the wicked people who lived in the world, by a deluge; saving only Noah and his family in the ark. He destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the people who lived in them, by fire sent down from heaven, saving only Lot and his two daughters;—though Lot's wife would have been preserved alive also, if she had not been disobedient to the angel of God.

God hates wickedness; he cannot bear to look on it. He is very merciful, it is true, and will forgive those who have been wicked if they will be truly sorry for their sins, and trust in Jesus Christ to save them; and show that they really do so, by forsaking their sins and obeying the commands of God. But the wicked who

keep on in their wickedness, and do not repent and trust in Christ, and who do not love and obey God, he will punish very severely indeed. For Jesus Christ himself tells us, that such wicked people will be sent, at the day of judgment, *into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Think of these things, my dear children. You may not be, and I think you are not, murderers, liars, robbers, and idolaters, as the people of Nineveh were. But are you never *somewhat like them*?

Are you not sometimes angry with your brothers and sisters, and with other children, and strike them, and hurt them? Suppose you keep on doing so more and more, till you grow up to be men and women, is there not great danger that you will become very passionate, and have a very bad temper; and that some time or other you may get in such a rage as to kill somebody?

For the murderer himself will tell you, that when he was a little child, he never thought he should be a murderer. And yet you see he has become so, because he did not repent of his sinful anger when he was young, and pray to God to enable him to get rid of it. Children who get into a passion, and strike and hurt others, and keep on doing so, are certainly in danger of becoming murderers, as the people of Nineveh were.

You may not, my dear children, be liars as people of Nineveh were; but have you never told any falsehoods? Have you never deceived any body and said what was not the exact truth?

Remember, if you keep on doing so, you will grow more and more careless about telling the truth, and will be in great danger of telling falsehoods, and of doing this more and more; and at last of becoming liars as the people of Nineveh were.

You have never robbed any body. But have you never taken any thing that was not your own, and kept it? Have you never kept any thing that you have found, without trying or even wishing to find the owner, and return it to him. People do not become great thieves and robbers at once. They take little things at first, which they think are not worth much, and which others will not miss, or even want to use again; and they keep on taking things, till they become more and more wicked, and at last get to be great thieves and robbers, as the people of Nineveh were.

Besides, people would not steal any thing if they did not first *covet it*, or wish to have for their own what belongs to another. And this is the reason why God in the tenth commandment says, *Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's*;—thou shalt not wish to take from



another what belongs to him, and deprive him of it, and have it for thy own.

My dear children, have you never broken this tenth commandment? If so, and if you continue to covet things which belong to others, although you may not have yet begun to steal any thing, is there not great danger of your doing this, and of your becoming thieves, and perhaps robbers, as the people of Nineveh were?

You do not make any idols to worship. Many of you have never seen an idol. But although you do not worship idols instead of the true God, do you not love many things more than you love God? If so, it is very much the same thing as if you loved and worshipped idols, instead of loving and worshipping the true God.

For why do people make and worship idols? It is because they do not feel willing to love, and obey, and worship God. They dislike to do this. There is something in the true God which they do not like. They like their idols better. They know that the true God commands them to be like himself, and to quit all kinds of wickedness, and *to be good and to do good*. They know too, that the idol does not command this, and that while they love, and serve, and worship the idol, or false god, they can keep on in all their wickedness. So they choose to do it.

Now, if you love any thing more than you

love God, you have your idols too, my dear children ; they may not be idols of wood, or stone, such as the people of Nineveh had ; but they are things which you love so much, that they keep you from loving and obeying God as you ought ; and you do indeed break the first commandment as truly as the people of Nineveh did.

The first commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* ; and Jesus Christ has told us that this means the same thing as to say, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.*

Do you thus love God, my dear children ; or do you love other things a great deal more than you love God ? If you do not love God the most, I fear, if you had lived in Nineveh, you would have worshipped their idols, and been idolaters as they were.

Think of these things. Look into your minds and hearts. See if you have right thoughts and feelings, such as God commands you to have. See if you love Him more than any thing else ; see if you say and do what He commands.

If you have not done this,—if you have had wrong and wicked thoughts and feelings,—if you have said and done very often what you ought not to say and do ; then God has been very much dis-

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## THE HISTORY

pleased with you. And he is still displeased with you, and will continue to be so, if you do not feel sorry for all your wickedness, and trust in Christ to save you.

Do you think because you are not now as wicked as the people of Nineveh were, that you are but a little wicked, and that God will not punish you. He will punish all the wicked persons who do not repent of their wickedness and forsake it.

Fear, too, my dear children, that if you keep on in your wickedness, you may at last become as wicked as the people of Nineveh were. That will be dreadful indeed! For such wickedness, if it is not repented of and forsaken, will meet with a very terrible punishment after death, in the future world.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Jonah tries to flee to Tarshish.—A dreadful storm.—The sailors cry to their false gods.—They throw their goods overboard, to save the ship.—Men will part with any thing, to save their lives.—How much more ought we to be willing to part with any thing, to save our souls ?*

THE wickedness of Nineveh was so great, that God commanded Jonah *to go and cry against it* ; to go, and cry aloud, in the streets of the city, so that all the people could hear him ; and tell them of their great wickedness, and of the dreadful punishment which their sins deserved.

Jonah was afraid to do this. He thought, that it would be a difficult and dangerous journey, to go alone, a great way from his own country, among strangers. And, when he should get to Nineveh, and begin to preach to the people, he feared, that they would be very angry with him, and, perhaps, kill him. He forgot, that God could take care of him ; and that it was his duty to obey God, whatever might happen to him. For no fear of any thing, however dreadful, which man can do unto us, should lead us to disobey the commands of God.

Being thus afraid to do as God commanded him, Jonah thought, that if he could get out of

his own country, and from the presence of the Lord, from that *peculiar presence of God*, which in some way, he was sensible of, when called upon to prophecy, God might not again direct him to go to Nineveh. So he went to a place on the sea-coast, called Joppa, (which you can see on the map,) where he found a ship about to sail to Tarshish, and there he thought he should be safe. For Tarshish was a great distance from Joppa; and, as some think, it was in Cilicia, a country at the east end of the Mediterranean sea. But in all this, Jonah acted both foolishly and wickedly. For how could he hope to escape from God, who could see him as well at Tarshish, as in his own country; and would do with him as He thought best, as well in one place, as in another.

Jonah forgot all this, and paid the master of the ship what he asked for carrying a person from Joppa to Tarshish, and went on board. Pretty soon, the ship sailed from Joppa, and got out into the sea, a great way from land. And as the wind blew fair, and the ship went pleasantly along through the waves, Jonah felt more and more secure. He looked towards his own country, which he had left, and thought from how much trouble and danger he was escaping. He looked towards the place where he was going, and expected before long to be there; and there he thought, God would let him remain, without commanding him any more to go to Nineveh.

Sometimes it is so with persons who are doing wrong. Every thing seems to be going on pleasantly ; and they think it will always be so. But, sooner or later, those who disobey the commands of God, and continue to do so, will find trouble and sorrow ; and if this does not happen to them in this life, it certainly will in that which is to come. For God tells us, in the Bible, that *there is no peace unto the wicked* ; no peace that will be of long continuance ; sometimes, it is wholly destroyed in this world, and it will certainly be so, in the next.

It was not long, before Jonah found this to be true, in his own case. “ The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”

A violent storm at sea, is a terrible sight. The ship rolls about, sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other. The large pieces of wood of which it is built, and which are fastened together, are pulled and strained, and make a loud, creaking noise ; and, sometimes, it almost seems as if they would come apart. The sails flap about, the ropes creak, the masts tremble, the captain is crying with a loud voice, to tell the sailors what to do ; and they are running, one way and another, pulling the ropes, and altering the sails, to try to keep the ship right, so that it may not upset and sink.



All the sky is covered with dark clouds; so that, in the night, the moon and stars cannot be seen; and, in the day-time, it looks almost as if it was night. The rain falls fast; the wind blows furiously; the waves roll high, like hills or mountains, and the ship rides fearfully over them. Sometimes it is at the bottom of the waves, with high waves all around it; looking as if they were just about to come over it, and bury it in the deep. Then the ship goes up a steep wave, like a waggon ascending a hill, only it mounts up with astonishing swiftness. Then it stands a moment, on the very top of the wave, balanced there, and trembling. Then suddenly it begins to descend again, and down it goes, down the long, steep waves, into the gulf below, as if to be buried in the ocean, and lost for ever.

How do you think you would feel in such a storm at sea, if you were to stand on the deck of the ship, and look all round, and see what I have been describing to you? Would you not be very much afraid, and feel that it was God alone who could save you, and pray to Him for protection?

Yes; not only little boys and girls are afraid in such storms at sea, but men and women also. And it often happens, that the captain and the sailors are afraid, and will cry to God to save them; though, at other times, perhaps, they think very little about Him, or even take his

name in vain, and do many wicked things. No persons are more afraid to die, or more alarmed when they are in great danger, and death seems to be near, than these wicked people are, who are the least prepared to die.

It was just so with the persons who had the care of the ship in which Jonah was, while the tempest was raging. The captain and the sailors, or, as they are called, "*the mariners*," were afraid, and cried every man unto his god."


These men, it seems, did not all worship the same God. Perhaps they were of different countries; for this is often the case among the sailors, who are on board the same ship. None of them knew the true God. They were false gods, and idols, which they worshipped; and these were different, one from another. How strange, that they should think, that these different gods should have made the storm. Did they all unite together to make it? Or, did one god make it cloudy, and another make it rain, and another cause the wind to blow, and still another, the wave to rise?

How happy we are, that we know so much better than these poor "*mariners*" did. We know, that there is but *one true and living God*, and that he made all things, and governs all things. We know that it is He, and He alone, who gives sunshine and clouds, fair weather, and rainy weather; who causes the soft and gentle

breezes to fan the air, or bids the winds blow roughly, and storms and tempests to arise. He has taught us this in the Bible, and that we should pray to *Him alone*, to save us in times of difficulty and danger. God has been very kind thus to make himself known to us; and ought we not to pity those who have not yet the Bible in their hands, and who, like the mariners in the ship with Jonah, still look to false gods, and to idols, to protect them? Ought we not to do all we can to give them the Bible, that they may know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom God has sent into the world, to save us from what is a great deal more dreadful than a storm at sea, or the loss of our lives—to save us from the loss of our never-dying souls?

After crying for help to their false gods, the mariners began to take the goods that were in the ship, and to cast them overboard into the sea. And they cast them all overboard, hoping that this would lighten the ship so much, that it would ride more easily over the waves, and not be in danger, as it was every moment, of being filled with water, and of sinking into the deep.

Men will do any thing to save their lives. If necessary, they will part with the most valuable things, and even be willing to lose all they have. If you had been in that ship, my dear children, would you not have been ready to throw all the things that belonged to you overboard, and never



see them again, if by so doing, you could have helped to lighten the ship, and save your lives?

I dare say, you would have done so very quickly and cheerfully. You would not have hesitated to do it a moment.

Are you now willing to do as much *to save your souls*? Your souls are worth a great deal more than your bodies. In a few years, your bodies will die, and moulder away to dust. But your souls will never die. They will live hundreds, and thousands, and millions of years; longer than you could count in a whole year—longer than all the people in the world could count, if they should keep on counting all their lives, and if all that they should count could be added together, and make a number of years so vast, that you could not think how vast it would be. For your souls will live hundreds, and thousands, and millions of years longer than *this vast number of years*; and longer still, and longer. Your souls will still keep on living, and never stop living; they will live as long as God lives, that is, *they will live for ever*.

And your souls will be happy for ever,—or they will be wretched for ever. God tells us so in the Bible.

You would cast away all that you have, all that you love most, if it were necessary to do this in order to save your lives. How much are you willing and ready to cast away, *to save your*

*souls?* Jesus Christ has told us, that if we have any thing as precious to us even as one of our eyes is, and which keeps us from loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; or which leads us to think, to feel, or to act wickedly; we must give it up, we must cast it away from us, as the mariners in the ship threw their goods into the sea. No matter how precious it is to us, or how much soever we love it; we must love it no more, we must part with it readily and cheerfully, that we may not be tempted by it to sin; and that we may be the better able to love and obey God, and to love and do good to others. And Jesus Christ says, if we do not do so, we cannot be his friends—we cannot be saved by him.

On Sunday, perhaps you had rather play or read some amusing story-book, than go to church and the Sunday school; or if you are at home, than to think of God, and to pray to him, and read his holy word. Then you are unwilling to give up these things, that you may save your souls. For your souls will be lost unless you trust in Christ, and love him; and he has said, that if you do indeed love him, you will keep his commandments. And his commandments are the same as God's commandments, one of which as you know is, *Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.*

And so, if you do any thing else that keeps

you from loving and obeying God, or if you love any thing else more than you love God, and are unwilling to give up and forsake these things, it shows that you are not so wise as the mariners who were in the ship with Jonah. How foolish they would have been to refuse to cast their goods into the sea, if doing so would render it more probable that their lives would be saved. How much more foolish and guilty, my dear children, will you be, if you are unwilling to give up and forsake any thing that will prevent you from trusting in Christ, and loving and obeying God, and saving your souls.

Hear what our Saviour Jesus Christ says on this subject, and may you never forget it.

*For what is a man profited (what real good will it be to him) if he shall gain the whole world, (every thing in it that he loves and wishes to possess) and lose his own soul, (never go to heaven to be happy there, but be miserable in hell for ever)—or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.*

What, my dear children, would you be willing to give away, or exchange *for your life*, that it might be saved, if you were in danger of losing it, as the mariners and Jonah were of losing theirs? You would give up any thing and every thing. Are you willing to do the same, that *your never-dying souls may be saved*? I ask you the question. You can answer it to yourselves.

## CHAPTER IV.

Jonah asleep.—The Captain wakes him, and calls upon him to pray.—Sinning makes people leave off praying.—Remorse is a source of wretchedness.—Casting lots explained.—The mariners cast lots.—The lot falls on Jonah.

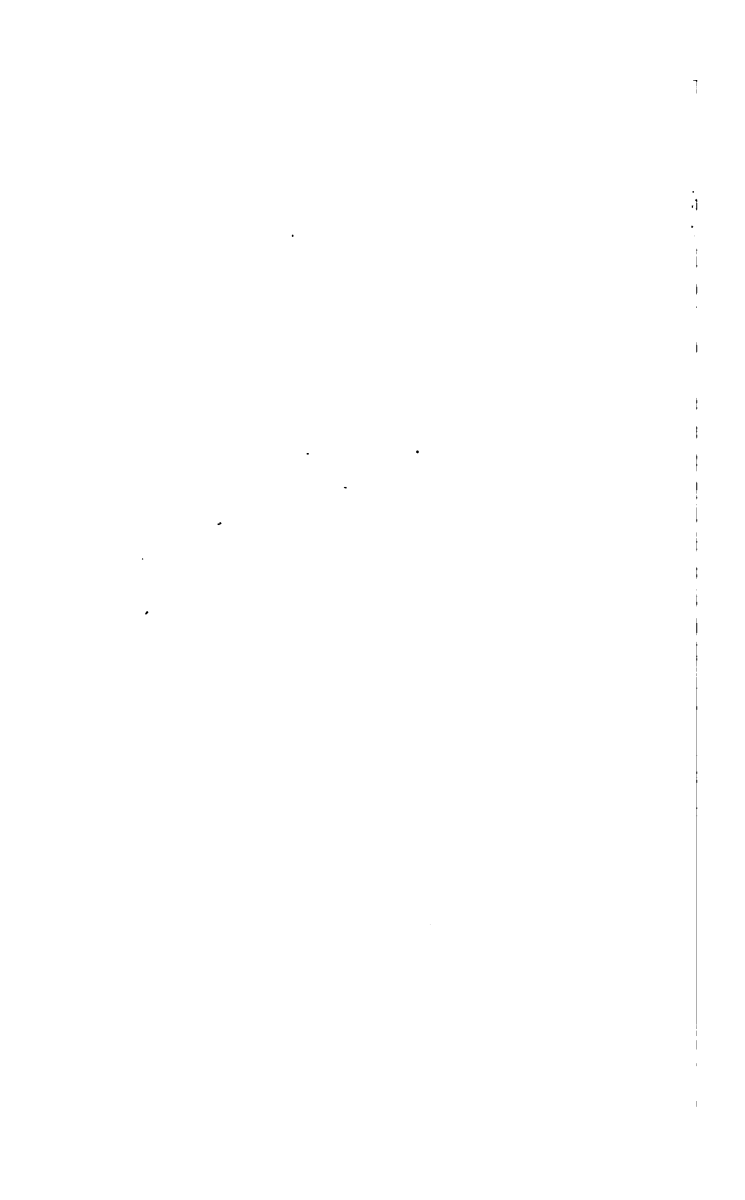
WHILE the storm was still raging, and the mariners busily engaged in throwing their goods overboard, Jonah was gone down inside of the ship, and was there fast asleep. The rattling of the rain, the roaring of the wind, the waves rolling and beating against the ship, and all the noise which the captain and sailors made, in throwing the goods overboard, did not awake him. He slept soundly, and was perhaps dreaming of sailing along pleasantly to Tarshish, and of soon arriving there. He must have been very much startled and surprised, as he awoke, at hearing the master of the ship crying out, with a loud voice,—“What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.”

The mariners had all been praying to the gods in whom they believed, and the captain thought, that Jonah ought also to pray to his God. He might have thought that the God









of Jonah, if Jonah prayed to Him, would be more able to save them than the gods to whom they had been praying, and of whose assistance he now began quite to despair.


We do not read in the Bible what Jonah said to the master of the ship. It is very probable, that he was greatly alarmed, and that he began to fear that he was about to be punished for his wickedness in disobeying the command of God, to go to Nineveh. It is not probable that he prayed for forgiveness and deliverance. If he had, I think the Bible would have told us so. When people do as Jonah did, and go on sinning against God, and forget their duty, and think they are safe ; if sudden danger overtakes them, they feel both ashamed and afraid to pray. They ought to pray,—to pray immediately—to confess their wickedness to God, to beseech him to forgive them, and to deliver them from the evil which they fear. But it is very seldom that they do so. For there is an old saying, which is a very true one, and which I hope you will always remember: *praying will make people leave off sinning, or sinning will make them leave off praying.*

When you find, my dear children, that you do not wish to pray to God daily, and that you put off doing it, because it is disagreeable to you, you may be sure, that there is something wrong about it. You are taking pleasure in

some kind of sin ; you love something a great deal more than you love God ; and that is the reason that you do not pray to him. You are disobeying some of his commands as Jonah did ; and while continuing to do this, and knowing, all the while that you are doing it, you will find either that you are unwilling to pray at all, or, that if you attempt to do it, you do not pray from the heart. The surest way to prevent this, is to avoid all kinds of wickedness, and to pray earnestly to God, to deliver you from it, and to enable you to love and obey him. If Jonah had done this, he would not have disobeyed the command of God, nor have been overtaken by so dreadful a storm.

Praying to their gods, and casting their goods overboard, seemed to be of no use. The storm still raged violently, and the poor mariners thought, that it could not be long, unless there was some change for the better, before their vessel would be shipwrecked, and themselves lost in the depths of the sea.

They began to think, that there must be some particular reason for such a terrible storm, and that some one of their gods, or perhaps the God of Jonah, was angry with them, on account of the wickedness of some one on board. They talked so among themselves, and each one said, he wished they could find out for whose cause the evil had come upon them. Each one ought



to have thought of his own wickedness, and that *it was itself* a sufficient cause for the evil. But every one was willing to excuse himself, and to think that somebody else was a great deal more wicked than he was ; and so much *more wicked* than himself and all the others were, as to call down the vengeance of his god upon them.

When children see that their parents look displeased, and do not treat them as they do when they are good children, they begin to think, that it is because they have done something wrong ; and, if they know that they have been wicked and disobedient, they fear the still greater displeasure of their parents, and that some severe punishment is near at hand. And, in the same way, wicked men are often in great fear, when some trouble overtakes them. It sets them to thinking on their wickedness, and to consider how much it deserves the displeasure of God, and they fear that he will inflict some dreadful punishment upon them. This is what is called *remorse*. It is a most unhappy feeling, and is often more distressing than any other pain which we can endure. I dare say, you have felt it sometimes, my dear children. If you are wicked, you will feel it again, and if you grow more and more wicked, this remorse will grow more and more distressing ; unless you become so very, very wicked, and so hardened in sin, as not to feel it at all. How dreadful

that would be! But it would not last long: For, after the souls of wicked persons who do not repent, and trust in Christ, and love and obey God, go into the other world, they remember all their past wickedness; and remorse wakes up again, and they feel it in all its bitterness. They will feel it for ever, and it will be *the principal cause of their wretchedness*, to think how very sinful and foolish they have been, and how justly they deserve to be cast out from heaven, and to suffer the terrible displeasure of God.

Oh! my dear children, if you wish to avoid this remorse, both in this world and the next, fear to sin against God, and beseech him to keep you from all sin.

In order to find out, if possible, who the very wicked person was, that was the cause of the great evil which had befallen them, the mariners on board of the ship, proposed to cast lots, and see upon whom the lot would fall.

Persons sometimes draw lots, by putting several strips of paper, of different lengths into a book, and seeing who will draw the longest one; and the person drawing it, is to have, or to do, a certain thing.

This casting of lots was more common in former times than it is now. The old Greeks and Romans used often to do it, and the Jews also. God sometimes commanded the Jews to do it. You will find an account of the casting

of lots, in the beginning of the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. It was ordered by God, that Aaron might determine which of two goats should be offered up in sacrifice, and which should be sent away alive into the wilderness.

You will see also, in the twenty-sixth chapter of Numbers, the fifty-first verse, that God ordered the land which he gave the Israelites, to be divided among the people by lot.

Cities also were given to the priests and Levites by lot, as you may read in the twenty-first chapter of Joshua.

In the first chapter of Acts, you will see another instance of casting lots. It was done by the disciples, when Peter had told them that another Apostle ought to be chosen in the place of Judas, who betrayed Christ, and afterwards hung himself. They selected two, and prayed, and then cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias.

You remember, also, that when our Saviour was crucified, the soldiers took his garments and cast lots, to see what every man should take. How these lots were cast, we do not exactly know. Perhaps the name of each person was written on something, and all the names thrown into the lap of some one, who folded his loose robe all round them, so that nobody could see them, and then putting his hand under the fold, and feeling among them, drew one out, without being able to know beforehand which it would

be. For we read in Proverbs, *The lot is cast into the lap : but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*

Lots have been used both for good and for bad purposes. They are used for very bad purposes in lotteries ; in which foolish people buy tickets, a few of whom draw prizes, but most of them blanks, or nothing. These lotteries do a great deal of harm. They make a great many people idle, and lazy, and dishonest. They ruin many ; and most of those who get money in them are greatly injured by growing rich so suddenly. I hope you will never buy a ticket in a lottery. If any body should even offer to give you a ticket, you ought not to take it. You should avoid having any thing to do with this wicked way of drawing lots.

After the mariners in the ship had cast lots, the lot fell upon Jonah. He must have thought before, that he was the person who had particularly called down the displeasure of God, and that it was on his account that the storm was threatening them with instant destruction. It would have been well if he had confessed this. But he did not. He endeavoured to conceal his guilt, till at length the lot falling upon him, he must have begun to feel not a little agitated. Still he did not tell them of his disobedience to the command of God, and why he had embarked in their ship to go to Tarshish.

## CHAPTER V.

Jonah tells who he is, and why he wished to go to Tarshish.—Sin will sooner or later be detected.—The mariners are in great alarm.—Jonah tells them to cast him into the sea.—They at length do it.—Jonah's feelings.—Children may die unexpectedly.—Are we prepared to die?

THE mariners finding that the lot had fallen upon Jonah, were anxious to know if he indeed was the cause of their calamity; and as he did not appear to be ready to give any explanation of the matter, they asked him a number of questions. "Tell us," said they, "we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is come upon us. What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"

Although they began to suspect that there was something wrong about Jonah, yet they treated him kindly. They wished to give him a fair opportunity of letting them know who he was, and what was his business. They thought that by knowing this, and also the character of his countrymen, they might perhaps be the better able to judge concerning him, whether he was an honest man, or one who had been guilty



of some great crime, and was endeavouring to escape from punishment.

Jonah replied, " I am a Hebrew ; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea, and the dry land." He also told them how God had commanded him to go to Nineveh, and cry against it ; and confessed at last his disobedience and guilt, in endeavouring to flee away from the performance of his duty.

By this time he began to have some true sorrow for his conduct, and he must have felt deeply humbled and ashamed thus to acknowledge his wickedness before those poor ignorant idolaters. For, though belonging to the nation of the Hebrews, whom God had chosen to be his peculiar people, and whom he had taught to understand his true character, and how they must love and obey him,—Jonah had acted as if he had known as little about the true God, as the mariners themselves did. He had great light and knowledge, and yet he sinned against this light and knowledge. He was a prophet too, as he told them ; his occupation was of the most important and honourable kind ; he was chosen by God himself to preach to his countrymen, and sometimes to foretell future events. And yet, how little had he acted like a prophet of the Lord. God had directed him to perform a great and difficult duty, but he had shrunk from it in a very cowardly way, and foolishly

thought that he could get rid of it, by escaping from his own country, and fleeing beyond the call of God, to a distant land.

And so it is, my dear children, that sooner or later, those who disobey the commands of God and commit sin, will be discovered, and their wickedness brought to light. This very often happens, as in the case of Jonah, in this world, and if not, *it surely will in the next*. For we are told in the Bible that *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* And our Saviour says, to show how particular this account will be: *Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

When Jonah had told the mariners who he was, and why he had embarked on board their ship to go to Tarshish, they were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why hast thou done this?" They knew something, probably, of the Hebrews, and what a great and powerful people they were. They might have heard that this people worshipped a different God from the gods of other nations, and that their God had done great wonders in enabling them to conquer the inhabitants of Canaan, and to take possession of their country. And when they found that

Jonah was one of this people, and that his God, as he told them, had made the sea and the dry land, they began to feel an awe of this great God. They saw, as they supposed, the anger of this God shown towards Jonah for his disobedience, in the dreadful storm which was still raging in all its fury around them. If this God was the Creator of the sea and land, he must be a powerful God indeed; and what might they not themselves have to fear from his displeasure. For they knew they had been wicked very often; and if God followed one of his own people, and even *his own prophet*, with such terrible marks of his indignation against sin, what might not they have to fear from the same indignation. One offence of Jonah, in endeavouring merely to escape from the performance of a duty which he considered very dangerous, had drawn down upon him the anger of God. How much reason then had they to dread this anger, when they considered the number of their own past offences. For though they had not known the true God, they might have known him if they had in good earnest sought to do it. Besides, they had always known many things which they ought to have done, and which they did not do, and many things which they ought not to have done, and which they did do. They felt guilty. They trembled and were afraid, lest the God of Jonah,—the God who made the

sea and dry land ; the God of truth and justice, might destroy them.

They said to Jonah, " Why hast thou done this ? " ' If thou dost indeed believe in the true God, and art one of his own favoured people, and one of his own prophets too, how hast thou dared to disobey him ? What a foolish and wicked man thou art, to bring thyself and us into this great distress and danger. If we had known all this, and why thou wast so anxious to go to Tarshish, we would not have taken thee on board our ship, and then we should have escaped this dreadful storm.'

While they were thus speaking, the sea grew still more tempestuous. The wind blew more furiously. The waves beat more terribly against them, and often dashed quite over the ship, threatening to overwhelm them at once, and bury them in the deep. What could they do ? They stood in some awe of Jonah, for he had told them that he was a prophet of the true God. Although they knew that God was very angry with him, yet they did not dare to do him any harm. They wished to know what *he thought* ought to be done ; thinking perhaps that God would direct Jonah what to do, and that if so, he would fear again to be disobedient to God.

" What shall we do unto thee," said they, " that the sea may be calm unto us ? " They

might have thought of throwing him overboard, and their manner of speaking seems as if they really did think of doing it. But they had a dread of Jonah as a prophet of the true God; and before proceeding to get rid of him in that way, they wished to see if he had any thing different to propose.

Jonah must have felt very unhappy at this time. His guilt was known to the mariners. They looked on him as very ungrateful, and disobedient to the God of his people, who had done so much for them and for him. They regarded him as the cause of the great calamity which had befallen them. They thought there was no hope of deliverance so long as he remained with them, a cowardly and wicked prophet attempting to flee from God and his duty. He was ashamed and humbled before them. He trembled and feared before God. We have reason also to think that he felt sorry for what he had done, and repented of it; and that he was willing himself alone to endure the displeasure of God, without having this displeasure fall upon those who were with him.

“ Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea ; so shall the sea be calm unto you : for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.” It is possible that in some way God directed Jonah to tell the mariners to do this. It would seem as if this was so, for if it were

not, how could Jonah have assured them so positively, that on throwing him overboard the sea would immediately become calm, and their danger be at an end. He thus fully confessed to them that it was on account of his wickedness that the great tempest had come upon them; and that their safety depended on their getting rid of him as soon as possible.

But for some reason the mariners did not seem willing to do any harm to Jonah. They might still be in awe of him, as a prophet of the true God. They might feel sorry for him, seeing him so humbled and penitent, and wish if possible to spare his life. So they made one more effort to save the ship. They rowed with all their might, to bring it to the land; but they were not able to do it. The wind blew very hard from the shore, and the high waves beat against the ship, driving it further and further out to sea. And now indeed the storm grew worse and worse, and destruction seemed very near. The next moment they might be buried in the deep waters.

They at length concluded to cast Jonah overboard. But before doing it, they felt that it was right to pray,—not to their false gods, who could not hear or help them,—but to the God of Jonah, the true God who made the sea and dry land, and who was now shewing them his great power, and his terrible displeasure against sin.

"They cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood : for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee."

They seemed still to be very reluctant to cast Jonah into the sea, and to be willing to do it only because it was absolutely necessary, and even pointed out to them as their duty by God himself, who does all things as he pleases. *It was his pleasure* that the dreadful tempest should arise and threaten them with destruction ; that when the lots were cast the lot should fall upon Jonah ; that he should confess his guilt ; and that he should tell them to throw him into the sea. In doing this they besought God not to cause them to perish for being instrumental in taking away the life of his prophet, and not to lay upon them innocent blood ;—that is, not to lay upon them the guilt of having shed the blood or destroyed the life of a person who was innocent of having committed any wickedness. Jonah was not such an innocent person. On the contrary, he had been guilty of a great sin, and felt himself that he deserved to die, and that it was right that his life should be sacrificed to save the lives of others.

"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea."

How Jonah must have trembled and feared







at this moment ! In the midst of such alarm and consternation, with a furious tempest raging, the heavens all covered with black clouds, the rain descending in torrents, the winds roaring, the waves rolling and dashing against the ship, and every thing manifesting the great displeasure of God ;—*himself the object of his displeasure*, and about to be plunged into the deep waters, there, as he thought, to die alone, forsaken both of God and man. He must have shrunk back, and shuddered at what was before him, as the mariners lifted him over the side of the ship, and cast him off from them, a poor, helpless, sinful man.

My dear children, how do you expect to feel when you come to die ? You will not be thrown overboard from a ship, as Jonah was ; but it is possible that you may be drowned in the water, or lose your life in some very sudden and unexpected manner. God does all things as he pleases. If he thinks it best, he can cause you to die at any moment. Many youths and little children die very unexpectedly, and others with disease and sickness. If you will go and examine the grave-stones in the burying-ground, you will see the names of not a few young children, and their ages on them. How soon will your turn come to be laid along-side of them, in the dark and silent tomb ? How soon will your soul, going out of the body, appear before

God, and there have to give an account to him of all that you have thought, felt, said, and done? Have you truly repented of all your sins? Have you truly trusted in Christ to save you? Do you love this Saviour? Do you obey his commands? Do you endeavour to do as he did, *to love and serve God, and do all the good you can to others?* Do you pray to God daily, that he would give you his Holy Spirit, to enable you thus to love him with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and your neighbour, (that is every body whom you have any thing to do with,) as yourselves? *This is the way, and the only way to be prepared to die.* Are you thus prepared to die, my dear children?

## CHAPTER VI.

The storm ceases.—The mariners fear before the power of God.—They worship him for his goodness.—How much more grateful to God ought we to be.—The meaning of sacrifices.—Christ the great sacrifice.—A dreadful punishment will overtake the impenitent.

As soon as Jonah was cast into the sea, it ceased from raging. The wind abated, and blew only a gentle breeze; the rain fell no longer; the clouds grew lighter, and here and there the blue sky was seen, the waves rolled less and less furiously, the ship began to ride over them more easily, and the danger appeared to be quite gone. It was God who did it; for as Jonah told the mariners, he is the God of the sea, and of the dry land. *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*

You remember, I dare say, my dear children, how Jesus Christ was once with his disciples in a small ship, crossing a lake, and that a very violent storm overtook them. The ship was

filled with waters, and they were in great danger of being drowned. Christ was in the hinder part of the ship asleep. His disciples awoke him, and cried out, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, *Peace, be still.* And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, *Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?* And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, *What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*

The mariners, too, who had cast Jonah into the sea, and who saw the winds and the waves immediately cease from raging, *feared exceedingly.* They feared the true God who thus showed his almighty power, and used it for their deliverance. They knew, by all that they had seen, that he must be the true God, and that the gods which they had worshipped were false gods, and could never render them any aid. They felt so thankful to God for rescuing them from death, and so much resolved to believe in him, and to worship him in future, that they made a vow, (or very solemn promise,) to do this; and either while they were in the ship, or as soon as they landed on the shore, "they offered a sacrifice unto the Lord."

These men, who had so lately been ignorant idolaters, and who had learned but a very little

about the true God, you see were ready to thank him for his goodness to them, and to resolve to worship and serve him in future. They were convinced by what they had seen, and by what the prophet had told them, that there was but *one only living and true God*. They believed that he was the Creator and Preserver of all things, and also that he was a just God, who would not suffer sin to go unpunished. They feared him ; they resolved to love and obey him.

My dear children, how much more you know about God than these poor mariners did. They had no Bible : *you have one* ; and you have kind parents and teachers to help you to read it, and understand the truths which it contains. They had no instruction about God, excepting the few words which Jonah told them. You have a great deal of instruction about God ; I hope your parents teach you at home, and you can go to sabbath-schools, and to church, and so learn a great deal every week about God, and his Son our Saviour, and what you must do, that you may grow up to be useful and happy in the world, and happy for ever in the world which is to come.

God has done you a great deal of good ; he has taken care of you by day and by night ever since you were born. When you have been sick, he has healed you ; he has kept you from a great many dangers and from death ; he has

given you food, and clothes, and a comfortable house to live in, and kind parents and friends; or, if any of you have lost your parents, and are fatherless and motherless children, think how God has shown himself as a father to you, and has raised up friends to take care of you. If you were to try to count all the various ways in which God has been good and kind to you, it would take you as long as you have lived to do it. You might as well try to count the sands on the sea shore, to see how many there were.

God has done a great deal more for you than he did for the poor mariners. Do you feel very thankful to him for it? Do you feel as thankful to him as they did? Do you feel *more thankful*? you ought to do so, and you should show your thankfulness, as they did, by fearing God; by fearing to sin against him; by dreading his displeasure more than any other evil which can happen to you. You should show your thankfulness, too, *by worshipping God*. The mariners offered up a sacrifice to God, perhaps a lamb, for this was the animal very often offered up in sacrifice.

People in former times, you know, offered up sacrifices as a part of their worship. God commanded the Jews to do it, to teach them that he had a right to every thing which they owned, and to require them to give it to him, whenever he chose to demand it.

But there was another more important reason why God commanded the Jews to offer up sacrifices ; it was to show them, by thus taking away the lives of animals, that their own lives might justly be taken away on account of their sins, and that it was owing to the great mercy of God that they were spared, and the animal slain in their stead. This was to enable them to understand, and that they might continually keep in mind, that there must be a still greater sacrifice offered up, to show God's terrible displeasure against sin, and that he might forgive every sinner who is truly sorry for his sins, and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to save him. It was Jesus Christ, you know, who offered up himself as the great sacrifice for sin, and poured out his own precious blood on the cross, that, *by thus dying himself*, he might save from the eternal death of the soul, all who put their trust in him.

Every lamb, and every animal that was offered up in sacrifice by the Jews, had a meaning in its death. *It showed, that without the shedding of blood, there could be no forgiveness of sin.* It pointed to a better and more costly sacrifice, which was yet to be made, to the Son of God himself, *the Lamb of God*, as he is called in the Bible, *who taketh away the sins of the world* ; for there is no sinner in the whole world, no matter how many and how great his sins have been, but who can have all his sins forgiven, and



have God for his eternal friend, if he will truly repent of his sins, and trust for pardon and salvation to Jesus Christ alone.

Sacrifices are now all done away ; they are no longer needed. The great sacrifice which they all were designed to represent, (or be like,) has been made. *One such sacrifice is enough.* It is worth more than thousands or millions of lambs, or of the costliest animals that can be found.

You are not required, as the Jews were, or as the poor mariners did, to worship God by offering up sacrifices. He only asks you to give him your heart, to love him with your whole soul, and strength, and mind, and to show that you do thus love him, by obeying the other command which he has given you, *to love your neighbour as yourselves*, to do to others as you would have others do to you, and to try by all the means in your power, to make others good and happy, both in this and the future world.

Do you feel, my dear children, that you truly deserve the displeasure and punishment of God, because you have so often and so greatly sinned against him ? Do you feel that it is only on account of the great sacrifice which was once offered up for sinners, when the Son of God died on the cross, that your sins can be forgiven by God, and your souls saved from eternal death ?

Do you feel truly sorry for all your sins; and do you trust in Jesus Christ alone, to deliver you from the punishment that your sins deserve? Do you feel resolved to endeavour hereafter, to love and to obey God, and to pray to him, daily, for his Holy Spirit, that you may be enabled to do this?

Unless you have feelings and thoughts like these, how can you hope to obtain the pardon of your sins, and the love and favour of God? Unless you thus repent, and trust in Christ, and love and obey God, you will feel his displeasure in a much more dreadful way than the mariners did, when the storm was raging around them, and threatening them with immediate destruction; yes, in a much more dreadful way *than even Jonah did*, when he was cast headlong into the sea.

A more terrible storm will yet overtake those who continue in sin, without any repentance for it, and without any looking to God, through Christ, for pardon and deliverance. For we read so in the Bible; and God would not tell us so if it was not true, and if it was not very important that we should know it,—that we may now, in good season, endeavour to avoid the danger.

*God is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The*

*Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

In that great and dreadful day, when Christ shall thus come to judge you and me, and all mankind; and when the wicked will be so afraid to meet him, that they will cry out *to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*; in that great and dreadful day, how will you feel, my dear children, if you have not prepared to meet it, by a sincere repentance for sin; and by a hearty faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

On the other hand, if you are thus prepared to meet it, you will have no fear. You will look up with joy to see and meet your Saviour. The look of Jesus Christ towards you will be full of love. It will be like the kind and affectionate look of your father or mother, when they have clasped you in their arms, and pressed you to their bosom. His voice will be sweeter than the most delightful music to your soul. Your joy will be greater than you can now conceive, when you hear him inviting you to go and be with him for ever. *And you will go, and be with*

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*him for ever* ; and with all the holy angels ; and with all who have been redeemed by his blood ; to enjoy a kind of happiness of which you can now have scarcely any idea. You cannot think, how great it will be. You will be happy in knowing more and more about the greatness and goodness of God, and his Son Jesus Christ ; in worshipping, loving, and serving them ; and in helping to make all around you happy ; and you will thus have the highest enjoyment, in seeing the endless progress of all around you, as well as yourself, in knowledge, in holiness, and in happiness.

Think of these things, my dear children. All that the poor mariners felt and did, when God appeared for their deliverance, is but small indeed, in comparison with the greater gratitude, and love, and obedience, which you should feel and shew towards God, and towards his Son, your Saviour. For, consider how much they have done for you, both for your comfort in this word, and for your eternal happiness in the next.

## CHAPTER VII.

God is very merciful to the penitent.—He designed to save Jonah.

—Why God afflicts us.—A great fish prepared by God to swallow Jonah.—Objections to this answered.—Miracles explained.

*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Jonah thought while the mariners were casting him into the sea, that his death was certain. He had no hope of escaping it. But God thought differently, as we read in the verses from the Bible which I have placed at the beginning of this chapter.

God is very ready to have mercy on those who are sorry that they have offended him; who truly repent of their sins, and turn to him with all their hearts, resolving to sin no more. Jonah

felt so, and God determined to spare his life. So that we may learn from this, that God will have mercy on those also, and pardon their sins, and save them, who truly repent of their sins, and turn unto God in the way which he has pointed out,—by faith in his Son, the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He may not always save such persons from the dangers to which, like Jonah, they are exposed. He sometimes has good reasons for their enduring trouble, and pain, and even suffering death itself. He may see that *this is best for them on the whole*. But then he will make all these troubles, and pains, and death at last, do them good, and prepare them for that better world, where suffering is known no more. If he does not think it best to save them, as he did Jonah, from the death of the body, he will certainly save them from the death of the soul; and then the death of the body is a small matter indeed.

Jonah thought he should soon be drowned in the deep waters. He thought that God had determined never again to send him to Nineveh. He felt that he was, indeed, very unworthy of going there in the service of God; a service, from which he had endeavoured to flee away in so shameful and wicked a manner.

But here again, God's thoughts were not like the thoughts of Jonah. For God intended to save his life for the very purpose of sendin

again to Nineveh, as you will see in a following chapter. And it was by the chastisements and trials which God called Jonah to endure, that he meant to bring him into that state of mind which would prepare him the better to preach to the wicked people in Nineveh. When God first told Jonah to go there, he was not in a right state of mind. He did not think and feel as he ought. But, after his chastisements and trials, which God intended for this very purpose, he became penitent and humble. He felt how weak and helpless he was. He trusted in God for strength and protection. He knew that God, who had delivered him from being drowned in the sea, was able to deliver him from any other danger, however great and terrible it might be. He felt that God had been very merciful to him, and that he ought to be willing to go to any place to which God might direct him, and to do anything which God might command him. It was thus that God determined to preserve Jonah, and to prepare him again to be sent to Nineveh, and to preach to its inhabitants.

God does not take any pleasure in afflicting you, my dear children. When he afflicts you, he does it to lead you to feel that you deserve it all, and a great deal more, on account of your sins. He does it to lead you to be humble before God, and to repent, and look to Christ to save you. He does it to lead you to feel your

dependence on God alone for strength and deliverance. He does it to lead you to feel that every thing on earth is but of very little value, and that to keep near to God, and enjoy his blessing and love, is worth more than all the world; that it is the only true good for which you should seek.

The afflictions and trials of Jonah made him feel so; do yours make you feel so?

I suppose you have remembered already how it was that God preserved Jonah, after the mariners had cast him into the sea. You knew this part of the story before, and that God had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Yes; this fish swallowed him up, just as soon as he was thrown over the side of the ship into the water.

Our Saviour in speaking of Jonah, as you may read in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, at the fortieth verse, calls this fish a whale. We do not know that it was exactly like the whales that live now. It might have been a good deal like them, and yet in some things different.

Some people who wish to find fault with the Bible, say, that the fish could not have swallowed Jonah, because the whales which are caught at the present day, have not throats large enough to swallow a man. But how can we know how large the whales were at the time when Jonah lived. The one that swallow



might have been very large indeed. Horses are of a great many different sizes, and yet they are all called by the same name. And, as I said before, it might not have been exactly like the whales that live now, or that lived at our Saviour's time. It might have even been a kind of fish that was not then known, and for which there was no name; but being a good deal like a whale, our Saviour might very properly call it by that name. Besides, if God had thought best to do it (and He has not told us whether he did or did not,) He might have very easily created a great whale, on purpose to swallow up Jonah, and with a throat large enough to do it.

You may hear other objections made, my dear children, against some things of which we read in the Bible. You may hear foolish and wicked people laugh about them, and say, that they never could have happened; and that, because the Bible says they did happen, the Bible contains some falsehoods, and that, therefore, we cannot believe any thing which it contains.

Do not let what such people say, trouble you at all, or lead you to think of the Bible as they do. It is almost always the case, that the persons who make these objections have read and studied the Bible very little indeed; perhaps not all: Ask them, how often they have read it through, and whether they have prayed humbly and earnestly to God, to enable them to under-

stand it ; and see what they will answer. Ask them if they think what it commands is good and right, and whether they love to obey it, so far as they can understand it. Ask them if they have read and studied our Saviour's sermon on the mount, and whether there are any parts of it against which they, or any body else, can make any objections. Ask them if they feel willing to obey all that Christ teaches and commands, in this sermon on the mount, and whether they do not think that they and all mankind would be a great deal better and happier, if they did study it and obey it. Ask them if they have ever read any of those books, of which there are a great many in different libraries, that learned, and wise, and good men, have written to explain the very difficulties which they think they find in the Bible. Ask them if they know that, in these books, the very objections that they make, with so much noise and confidence, against some things in the Bible, have been answered again and again—entirely answered, so that every honest and fair mind must see that they are no objections at all.

In preparing the whale, or great fish, to swallow up Jonah, God performed a miracle. What is a miracle ? I will try to tell you.

Men and women, boys and girls, do a great many things, which they can do again and which others can be told how to do, if

not already done them. They can do these things, without being taught by God how to do them, or without being helped directly by Him, in doing them. They either find out themselves how to do them, or have been taught by others; and they do them with that power of mind, and of body, which God has given us the means of acquiring. This power of mind and of body which is common to men, in all countries, and at all times, we call the *natural power of man*. When we see a large house, we say that it was built by the natural power of men. But if we should be told that one man, in one day, had built a large house, we know that he could not have done it by his own natural power, but, that if he did indeed do it, God must have given him a very great deal of power, at the time, and aided him directly in doing it. We should say, that *his power of doing it was supernatural*.

A man walks four miles in one hour. *That is done by his natural power*. Jesus Christ walked on the water. That was not done by the natural power of his body. It was done by a power like God's. *It was supernatural*.

A physician gives medicine to a very sick person, who is near to death, and restores him to health and strength. It is done by the skill of the physician, and by the power of the medicine. *It is done naturally*. Other physicians might have done it, with the same kind of medicine.

But when Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, He only spake to him, and commanded him to come forth from the tomb. *It was done supernaturally.* Men cannot call dead persons to life, by speaking to them.

Flowers and trees grow ; they bear blossoms and fruit ; they grow old, and decay, and die. They do all this, *naturally.* It is common, all over the world, for flowers and trees to do so. The wind blows, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another ; the rain, and hail, and snow, fall from the clouds ; the lightnings flash, and the thunder rolls. All this happens, *naturally.* It has happened so, in a great many different parts of the world, and at a great many different times. The sun rises and sets ; the moon comes at stated times, and rises and sets also ; the stars appear in the sky, and move from east to west. All this happens, *naturally.* It has happened again and again, in all parts of the world, and will continue to happen so.

It is God, indeed, who made men, and women, and children, and gave them minds capable of finding out how to do many curious and wonderful things, and gave them bodies capable of acquiring a great deal of strength. It is God, who makes the flowers and trees grow ; who causes the wind, the rain, the hail, and the snow, the lightning and the thunder ; who makes the sun and moon and stars appear, and rise,

and set. *How He does this*, we do not know. We see that he does it, for years and years; and alike in different places, at different times; or, in other words, that he does it *regularly and uniformly*. We say, that *it is all natural*; that it happens *according to the laws of nature*, which means the same thing as to say, that *God does it regularly and uniformly*.

God has done many things differently from all this; not in a natural way, but in a supernatural way. He has also enabled some men to do things, not in a natural, but in a supernatural manner. And such things, done either by God himself, or by men with power received directly from God, are called *miracles*.

God caused a pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, to go before the Israelites, and show them the way. *This was a miracle*. Moses smote the rock in the wilderness, and water flowed from it, to give the people and their cattle drink. *This was a miracle*. While the Israelites were passing over the river Jordan, God caused the waters which came down from above to stand still, and to rise up in a heap, so that all the people passed over on dry ground. Joshua spake to the sun and to the moon, and commanded them to stand still, and they did so. *These were miracles*.

Many more miracles are mentioned in the Bible; and you remember how many our

Saviour performed, and how much kindness he showed in performing them.


So it was a miracle, when the great fish swallowed up Jonah. God either created the fish on purpose to swallow him up ; or else caused some fish, already living in the sea, to be near the ship at the very moment that Jonah was thrown overboard, so as to swallow him, and have him *remain alive*, inside of the fish, three days and three nights. This was, indeed, a miracle, and a very wonderful one. It is told us in the Bible, to show us the great wisdom and power of God ; how he could find out a way to save Jonah, when his death appeared certain, and thus prepare him the better to do the will of God, and still to go to the city of Nineveh, and preach to its wicked inhabitants.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Jonah swallowed by the fish.—He prays to God.—Duty and nature of prayer, in time of danger. Explanation of Jonah's prayer. Afflictions are very distressing, when they are the marks of God's displeasure against our sins.

WHAT must have been the horror of Jonah, when he saw the great fish, close by the side of the ship, with its vast mouth wide open; ready to swallow him up. He must, indeed, have thought, that his destruction was both certain and immediate. How would you feel, my dear children, to be in the same danger of being swallowed by a great fish? Some persons, at the present day, are caught by a fish, called a shark, and eaten up by it. It must be a very dreadful kind of death.

Jonah thought, that he was about to suffer the same dreadful kind of death, and to be eaten alive by the fish. In his great distress and fright, he cried unto the Lord, as he was entering the mouth of the fish; and continued to cry unto him, after the fish had quite swallowed him up. He knew that nothing was too great or too difficult for God to do. He still hoped, that he might be preserved, and was somewhat encou-



raged thus to hope, because he found, that the fish had not eaten him, and that he was still alive, although he was inside of the fish. He prayed unto God ; and, afterwards, he wrote down the prayer which he offered up while inside of the fish, and it is the same that we read in the Bible. It is a very excellent prayer, and I will endeavour to explain it to you. For *you* may be in great trouble and distress, my dear children, and feel as Jonah did, that you can receive help from God alone, and that, unless he does help you immediately, your destruction is certain. If any one of you should ever be in such trouble and distress, be sure to pray to God most earnestly. Cast yourself into his hands. Feel willing to have him to deal with you as He thinks best. Hope that He may deliver you. Remember that he is very merciful, and that He has almighty power. Think how he saved Jonah. Cry to him as Jonah did. Put all your trust for safety in Him alone. All who love God, do so. If you truly love God you will do so.

But we will attend now to Jonah's prayer. He said, " I cried by reason of mine affliction, unto the Lord, and he heard me ; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

It was the great affliction in which Jonah was, that made him cry unto the Lord. That was the reason of his crying, and a good reason



indeed it was. It is in the time of affliction, of distress and danger, that we should pray earnestly to God, that he would deliver us; if to do so is consistent with his will; above all, we should pray that he would give us *peace of mind*, by leading us to think and to feel, that he does all things well, and that he will, at least, deliver us from the greatest of all evils, by saving our souls, even if our bodies must die.

God, too, has invited us thus to call upon him, in time of affliction and danger. He has promised to hear the prayers of his own children who come unto him, truly sorry for their sins, and trusting in Christ as their Saviour, and as the only way in which they can hope to receive any good thing from God. *The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and our shield. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee.*

You must not think from this, my dear children, that if you pray to God in affliction, ever so sincerely and earnestly, he will do just what

you may wish to have him to do, or that he will answer your prayers, just as you may wish to have him answer them. You should consider, even while you are praying for deliverance, (which it is quite proper for you to do,) that still God may have *some other way* of deliverance than the way you are thinking of. You should remember that he may not see it best to grant you his aid at the very time that you ask for it, and that it may be for some good, either to yourselves or to others, that you should remain longer in affliction and danger. You should feel, too, that your deliverance, I mean *the deliverance of your body* from danger and suffering, and even from death itself, may not be for the best. You should feel that *your true deliverance may be the deliverance of your soul from sin and eternal death*, and that this deliverance can take place, only by your continuing longer in affliction, and danger, and suffering, or indeed only by the death of your body.

If Jonah had not been overtaken by the storm, and brought into great distress and danger, and very near to death itself; if the wind had continued fair, and the weather pleasant, and he had arrived safely in Tarshish, he might have kept on in his wickedness, and wandered further and further from God, and his soul been lost for ever.

God knew that his only true deliverance.

caused the storm to arise which alarmed the mariners so much and led them to cast lots. God caused the lot to fall upon Jonah, who was led by it to confess his guilt; and I think that, in some way, God directed Jonah to tell the mariners to cast him into the sea, that they might be saved. So that, knowing that God had directed all these things, Jonah might well say,—“Thou hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas.”

“All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.” David uses words like these, in the forty second psalm, where he says, that his soul was cast down and disquieted within him. Like Jonah, he was in great distress. Like Jonah, he prayed to God, and trusted in Him, and was able to say to his soul—*Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

Jonah probably had read these words of David, and remembered them as well suited to his situation. David used them figuratively; that is, he meant to say, that God had brought troubles upon him, as great and dreadful, as the troubles of mariners are at sea, when real billows and waves roll over them. Jonah felt, that God had caused *the real billows and waves of the sea* to roll over him, and that they were intended, by their noise and fury, to show him the very great displeasure of God against him, as if

ready, like the waves, to overwhelm and bury him in utter destruction.

This it is, my dear children, that makes some troubles which happen to us so distressing, and some dangers which threaten us so terrible. If we have reason, as Jonah did, to consider them as showing us the great displeasure of God against us, for our sins; then they are distressing and terrible indeed. Nothing is more terrible than the displeasure of God against sin. You know, how it was shewn against the wicked, in their destruction by the deluge, and against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire sent down from heaven, bringing ruin upon them and their cities. *It is a fearful thing for sinners to fall into the hands of the living God.*

If trouble, and distress, and danger overtake us on account of our sins; if, in this way, we have to say as David and Jonah did, *All thy billows and thy waves pass over me*, let us humble ourselves before God. Let us confess our guilt, acknowledging the justice of our punishment, beseeching God to forgive us, and crying unto him for mercy and deliverance.

## CHAPTER IX.

Jonah almost in despair.—Yet he hopes in the mercy of God.—He looks towards the temple of God at Jerusalem.—Do we love the house of God?—God can deliver from the greatest danger.—God is very kind, to listen to our prayers.

WHILE crying unto the Lord, Jonah seems to have been in great distress of mind. “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever.”

For a little while it seemed to Jonah as if God had determined to forsake him entirely, and not even to look on him again with any favour or compassion: just as a father sometimes says to an ungrateful and wicked child; ‘Go out of my sight, I can have you with me no longer; I must leave you to go on in the way of sin and ruin which you have chosen, since you will not treat me with any respect or obedience.’

And God sometimes leaves sinners to go on in their wickedness, after he finds that they will

give no regard to his advice and warnings. He casts them out of his sight. He abandons them to the destruction which they themselves have chosen. They will be for ever banished from his presence in heaven, never to behold his goodness and glory there; and never to enjoy the holiness and happiness of those who are to spend a blissful eternity in his love and service. Think, my dear children, what a dreadful evil it is, to be cast out for ever from the presence of God, into outer darkness, far, far from the light, and peace, and joys of heaven! *Faith in Christ will save you from such a dreadful evil.* Go to him. Give your hearts to him. Trust in him. Love him. Obey him—without delay,—and you will be safe.

Yet Jonah still dared to hope in the mercy of God,—to hope a little, though he did it with fear and trembling. “Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” As if he had said, ‘I will not forget thy holy temple in my own land, in which I have so often worshipped thee. I will think of it, and the recollection shall save me from falling into utter despair. For have I not in times past there prayed unto thee, with some degree of sincerity and love? Have I not there taken delight in singing thy praises, and in listening to the instruction of thy word? Have I not there, in obedience to thy commands, offered up my sacrifices? Have I

not felt, as the blood of the victim was poured out, that my own life was forfeited by sin, and that I had no hope of forgiveness but in thy mercy, through the Saviour whom thou hast promised; and who, when he comes shall redeem his people from their sins? Have I not there, had my thoughts and my affections raised from the things of this world to thyself, and to heaven the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory? Hast thou not there heard my prayers, and accepted *the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart*, which I offered up, as the better sacrifice that thou requirest? Hast thou not there shed down thy Holy Spirit upon my soul, and given me the tokens of thy love?

‘And may I not hope, that I was then one of thy own children, and that I am still one; alas! a disobedient and ungrateful child, but not quite forsaken of my heavenly Father? For unto thee do I long to return, deeply humble for my sins, sorrowing for them, and imploring thy mercy. I would look unto thee; I would look again toward thy holy temple, hoping if my life is spared, again to visit its sacred walls, and there to offer before thee the sacrifice of a grateful heart, the tribute of praise and thanksgiving for all thy goodness towards me.’

Some such thoughts and feelings probably passed through the mind of Jonah, and glowed within his breast. And do you, my dear chil-

dren, think of the house of God, where you go on the Sabbath, with a pleasant and grateful remembrance? God is very kind in giving you the Sabbath, and in permitting you to go to the place where he is worshipped. Do you love to go there? How do you feel while you are there? Do you unite in the prayers that are offered up? Do you sing in your hearts when God is praised in the psalms and hymns? Do you attend to his word while it is read; and to his minister while he is speaking to you, and telling you what God requires of you, and what he promises to do for you, if you will love and obey him? Do you love to be there; and can you say as the Psalmist did; *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

Remember, my dear children, one very important and solemn truth. If you do not love to worship God in his temple here on earth, you will not love to worship him in his temple above in heaven, and cannot be admitted there to join the praises, and enjoy the happiness of those who will love and serve him, throughout eternity. *What you love most in this world, you will love*



*most in the next.* If you love God most in this world, you will love him most in the next, and this love will be fully satisfied in seeing him, in admiring him, in enjoying his favour, in worshipping him, and in serving him.

If you love other things besides God most, then you will love them most in the future world. You will love them, and desire to have them. But this desire will not be gratified. It will be very strong, like your thirst for water, when your lips are parched with a hot fever; and your not having the things that you desire, will be a great deal more painful than the suffering of the sick man who cries and begs for water to cool his burning tongue, but can get none. The things of this world will not go with you into the next. You will leave them all behind. But being all gone, you will long for them the more. You will long for them as your only good. But you will never see them again, and ungratified desires will be your greatest torment.

Think of these things, my dear children, and *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, that where your treasure is, there your heart may be also.*

Jonah felt most deeply, that his only hope was in God; and in looking to him, he trusted alone in his mercy for deliverance. How could any one possibly be in a more hopeless condition. If God did not stretch out his almighty

arm, and rescue Jonah, *who—what*, could afford him the least aid !

He was compassed about with the deep and dark waters, even to the soul. The thought of his danger made him feel *in his inmost soul*, how great and terrible this danger was. There the great fish was, and he inside of it, down, down in the very depths of the sea.

There are high hills and mountains, and deep valleys, at the bottom of the sea, just as there are on the land. The fish, with Jonah in it, went down to the very lowest parts of these valleys ; to the bottoms, or feet, of these mountains ; so that the depth closed round about him. The deep waters were all around him, and above him, folding him up in dismal darkness. And, sometimes, as he supposed, going into the hollow caverns, at the foot of the mountains, a long, long distance, under huge over-hanging rocks, with the sea-weeds which the fish swallowed, wrapped about his head ; it seemed, indeed, as if he was shut up in the lowest prison-house of the earth, with strong bolts and bars, rendering all prospect of escape utterly hopeless.

But God can save from the greatest danger, and can deliver, when there seems to be no way of escape. It was so with Jonah. For he says ; “ Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord ; and

my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple."

He might have thought at this time, judging from the motion of the fish, that it was going back again out of the dark, dismal caverns, and was rising once more to the top of the water. This gave him some new hopes of deliverance, and that his life, thus brought up from corruption, (from the grave, as it were, in which the body becomes corrupt, and moulders away,) would be spared, and himself in some way, be permitted to breathe the air, and see the light of heaven.

Then he remembered the Lord, although his soul fainted within him. Although he felt in his inmost soul, (as a person does who feels very sick and faint,) that all strength and life were gone, and death approaching, still he thought of God. He thought of all his past goodness, and how often he had delivered from danger and from destruction, those who put their trust in him. Perhaps he thought of Shadrach and his brethren, when they were cast into the fiery furnace; and how God preserved them; and also of Daniel's wonderful deliverance, when he was thrown among the lions in their den, and not one injured him at all.

At this time his prayer ascended to the heavens. It came in unto God, into his holy temple; into the place where he is worshipped by the angels, and by the spirits of all the holy and

happy, who have gone there from this world. God heard the prayer of Jonah, and was very soon to answer it.

Think, my dear children, how kind God is, thus to listen to the prayers of such sinners as Jonah was, and as you, and I, and all persons are. Think of God, who is in the highest heavens, in his vast and magnificent temple, seated on his throne, and surrounded by thousands and tens of thousands, of pure and holy beings, all of whom love and serve him continually. There God is, on the throne of his glory, ruling over all the hosts of heaven, and ruling over all the worlds and creatures that he has made—the Almighty Sovereign of the universe—King of kings, and Lord of lords. And yet, he can bend down from his throne, and regard the prayers of the smallest child that cries unto him!

In all your troubles then, my dear children, go to God, as I have before told you, and pray unto him. He is not so great a being, that he cannot attend to you. He hears the little birds when they cry, because they are hungry, and he provides them with food. Not a sparrow dies, and falls to the ground, without his seeing it, and taking notice of it. He sees you, at all times, and knows what is best for you. Go to him, as you would go to a kind parent. Remember, how he heard Jonah's prayer, and that he will hear yours also.


But remember, that Jonah prayed from his heart. He thought and felt, just as he spoke. He was very sorry for his sins, and cast himself on the mercy of God, for forgiveness and safety. When you pray, my dear children, you should feel so. *Beseech God to give you his Holy Spirit, that you may feel so.* And God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to all who ask him for it in truth—who really desire to have it ; that they may be led by it to repentance for all their sins ; to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ; to love and obey God : and to love their fellow-men, and do them all the good in their power.

## CHAPTER X.

Jonah is happy in trusting in the true God.—The idols of the heathen are lying vanities.—Duty of sending the gospel to the heathen.—Jonah vows a sacrifice of thanksgiving.—How ought we to shew our gratitude to God ?

JONAH, as we have seen, began to have some hope, that his prayer would be heard and answered. His confidence in God was growing stronger and stronger. He knew that he could safely trust in God ; and he thought how foolish and wicked it was to trust in any other being, or thing for deliverance. He compared the true and living God, in whom he trusted, with the false gods—the idols—whom the heathen worshipped, and to whom they looked for deliverance in times of danger. He felt happy in knowing the true God, and wished that others might know him also. “ They that observe lying vanities,” said he, “ forsake their own mercy.”

A vain thing, or vanity, is something that is wholly useless, and worth nothing. A very hungry man would think it a vain thing to have a few acorns placed before him, out of which to make a meal. They would be useless to satisfy his hunger. They would be vanity.



If a small straw should be thrown to a drowning man that he might save himself by it, it would be worth nothing to him. It would be vanity.

So the gods and idols of the heathen are vanities. They are useless, and worth nothing. They are lying vanities. They deceive those who look to them for help, just as persons who tell falsehoods—who make promises, and do not keep them—deceive, and disappoint others.

Those who *observe* these false gods, these lying vanities; who regard them with any feelings of respect; who worship them, and cry to them for deliverance in danger, or, at other times, for guidance and protection, “forsake their own mercy.” They forsake God, who alone can have mercy on them. *He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He is the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort. He is rich in mercy. He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

The mariners, you recollect, at first, called upon their false gods, to save them from destruction. But they found these gods to be *lying vanities*. They could afford no help whatever. And so it is with all the poor heathen, at the present day, who worship idols, and trust in

them. *They forsake their own mercy, their own best good, the pardon of their sins, and the love and favour of the true God. They must be blind, indeed, not to see, that their idols are nothing but lying vanities, that they cannot hear their prayers, nor do anything for them. Ought we not, my dear children, to feel very sorry, that so many poor, ignorant, wicked heathen, in various parts of the world, yet observe lying vanities, and forsake their own mercy? A few good missionaries, have gone to teach them about the true God, and how they may be saved, by trusting in Jesus Christ. The Bible has been translated into some of the languages which they speak, and been given to them. But thousands and millions of them have never yet heard a missionary preach, or seen a Bible. Do you not pity them, my dear children? Will you not remember them in your prayers? Will you not try to do something for them? If people would only give more money—then, more missionaries, and more Bibles, could easily be sent to the heathen. And there is money enough among us, if persons were only willing to give it. We might have houses, and furniture, and clothes, that cost less. We might often have plainer food, which would also be a great deal better for our health. We might thus give up many things that cost a good deal of money, and which we do not need for our comfort; and be*



able to save enough at the end of the year, to give to those who will take it, and make a faithful use of it, in sending missionaries and Bibles to the heathen.

Think of these things, my dear children ; and think, too, of our Saviour's express command which he gave to his disciples, and which we are bound to obey, if we hope that we are among the number of his disciples and friends. Just before he ascended to heaven, he said ; *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* We cannot all go, but we can send others. Are we not disobedient to the command of Christ, if we do not do it ? What can *you* do ? Can you save any money—some that you have thought perhaps of spending for what you really do not need, and which will do you no lasting good ? And, can you not also, earn some money, even if it is but a few pence, by doing some kind of work, for which your parents or friends will cheerfully pay you ? If, in these ways, you can give something to send missionaries and the Bible to the poor heathen, you will be obeying the command of Jesus Christ, and doing good to your fellow-men.

The money that you send may be enough to teach one little heathen boy or girl, as old as you are, about God and his son Jesus Christ ; and this little child may become a Christian, and be the means of teaching other persons, and

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of thus doing a great deal of good. Think of all that Christ did, that you might be saved; how, for your sakes, he became poor, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and poured out his blood in the most agonizing death on the cross; and say, whether you ought not to do something to make this precious Saviour known to those who are yet ignorant of him?

And one thing more I wish you to think of, as you grow older, if you do, indeed, hope that you are a true disciple and friend of Jesus Christ. If missionaries ought to go to teach the heathen, some persons must be willing to become missionaries. Who ought to be thus willing? *Every body else but you?* But if every one thought that others ought to go, and not himself, then no one would go. All would be unwilling, while each would still think, that others ought to be willing; for, otherwise no missionaries could be sent.

Something may happen to lead you to think of being a missionary. If so, pray much to God to direct you what to do. Get the advice of your parents and friends, and if the way seems to be open for your going—go;—go in the strength of your Redeemer, and spend your lives in making him known to the heathen. Be faithful unto the death in his service, and great will be your reward in heaven.

If Jonah had been willing to go and preach

to the heathen who lived in Nineveh, and who observed lying vanities, and had forsaken their own mercy, as God commanded him to do, he would have felt a great deal happier than he did, and have escaped the trouble and distress that came upon him. But his afflictions, as we have seen, were bringing him back to God and his duty. He began to believe, that he should again find that mercy, which, like the poor heathen, he had forsaken, *his own true mercy*, in being forgiven of God, and restored to his favour and love.

He now had a strong hope of deliverance; and, in view of it, exclaimed, "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

He seems to have thought his deliverance very near. "Salvation is of the Lord." "The saving of my life from destruction, and, what is of infinitely more importance, the saving of my soul from eternal death, to which my late sins had fearfully exposed me, is all owing to the mercy of God. I have not deserved it at all, indeed I deserve something very different from it, the just and terrible displeasure of God; and yet how great is his forbearance and long-suffering towards me. How great is his goodness, in what I now dare to hope will soon be my deliverance from this horrible prison-house. "Sal-

vation is of the Lord.”” Thus rejoicing in the prospect of once more walking abroad on the earth, and in being permitted to revisit his own country, and enter again into the temple of the Lord, Jonah resolves, in that holy place, to offer his *sacrifices of thanksgiving*, and to praise God for his deliverance. He had already vowed, (or made a very solemn promise,) to do this, and he intended to pay what he had vowed, to fulfil his promise, to do exactly as he had said he would.

In the seventh chapter of Leviticus, beginning at the eleventh verse, you can read about *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*, which the Israelites made unto God, when they wished to show their gratitude for his mercies.

Such a sacrifice Jonah vowed to make; and while making it, he intended to declare aloud the goodness of God, with *the voice of thanksgiving*; probably, in some sacred psalm of praise, singing of the mercies of the Lord, and inviting his friends to unite with him, that they might rejoice together, and express their gratitude, at the same time, for his deliverance.

*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.*

*Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him,*

*and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him.*

*I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.*

*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.*

*I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.*

Probably, with some such songs of praise, did Jonah enter the temple, on revisiting his native land, while about to offer up his sacrifice of thanksgiving, for the deliverance which had been afforded him, and to perform the vows that he had made.

Sacrifices, I have told you, my dear children, are all now done away. We must show our

gratitude to God, in some other manner, than by offering up an animal on the altar of the Lord. How do you show your parents and friends, that you remember their kindness to you, and that you are thankful to them for it? You let them see it in your cheerful obedience to their commands, and in your willingness to do any thing for their comfort and happiness. And if you have to give up any thing of your own, or put yourselves to inconvenience and trouble, in order to make them happy, you are very willing and ready to do it. This is the way in which children who truly love their parents and friends, show their gratitude to them.

And if you truly love God, my dear children, and are grateful to him for all his goodness and mercy to you, you will show your gratitude to him in the same way. You will cheerfully obey his commands. You will be willing and ready to do any thing that he requires of you. You will endeavour to make so good and kind a Being known to those who are yet ignorant of him, that they may love and obey him also. You will do all in your power to have others understand who Jesus Christ is, and why he came into the world. You will pray and labour that your friends, and acquaintances, and countrymen, and all mankind, may be brought to the knowledge of this Saviour, and to trust in him. You will cheerfully give up any thing:

of your own, or put yourselves to inconvenience and trouble, to do all this. And you will do it too, feeling that it is nothing more than what you ought to do. You will feel that by doing it, you do not place God under any obligations to do you good, as you sometimes feel that others should be kind to you, because you have been kind to them. On the contrary, you will feel, that you have so often failed in doing your duty ; and have so often quite neglected to do it ; and have so often and so greatly sinned against God, that you justly deserve his displeasure instead of his kindness. You will feel that it is only on account of his great mercy towards you, through Jesus Christ, that you can hope for the forgiveness of your sins ; for any favour from God ; or that he will accept your attempts to serve him, and grant you any blessings in this world, and still more admit you to the enjoyment of heaven.

These are the sacrifices which you can offer to God, to show your gratitude to him ; not on the altar, in his holy temple, as Jonah did : but *in your hearts and lives* ; in loving and obeying God ; and in feeling towards him, and towards his Son Jesus Christ, as such sinners as you and I are, ought to feel.







## CHAPTER XI.

The fish casts Jonah out upon the land.—God does many things, the manner of doing which we are not able to understand.—Jonah again sent to Nineveh.—He goes, and thus shows that his late repentance was sincere.

AT length, after Jonah had been brought into great distress, and very nigh to death itself, and deeply humbled before God, and penitent on account of his sins, his deliverance came. "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

He was set free from this dismal prison. He stood once more on his feet. He walked about. He breathed the pure air, and enjoyed the pleasant light of heaven. He looked around, and every thing seemed new, and bright, and fair.

For a little while, the fish swam about on the top of the waves, and then plunged again into the deep dark waters, to go down to the bottom of the sea. As Jonah saw it disappearing from his sight, he shuddered; for he could hardly feel that he was yet quite safe. It almost seemed to him, for a moment, that he was once more going with the fish down into the waters, and he started back as if to escape.

The waves closed over the fish, and Jonah found that he was indeed free from all danger.

Perhaps you wish to know, my dear children, what it was that God spake to the fish, and how it was that the fish understood what it was to do, when it cast out Jonah upon the dry land. The Bible does not tell us, and I cannot explain it to you.

God does many things, *the manner of doing which* the wisest man cannot understand at all. Grown up people do many things, the manner of doing which little children cannot understand, even if any one should try to explain it to them. They have not lived long enough, or learned enough, to be able to understand such difficult things. They must wait till they grow older, and know more, and have stronger minds, before such things can be explained to them.

But there is a vast deal more difference between the minds of God and our minds, than there is between the minds of men and women, and the minds of children. This difference is so great, that we cannot even conceive how great it is; it is infinite.

It is not at all strange, then, that we see many things around us which God does, or read in the Bible of many things which he has done; the reason of doing which, or the manner of doing which, we cannot understand at all.

God has not given us minds that are yet

capable of understanding them. We are all, in this respect, *like little infants*. Perhaps, in the future world, our minds may have so much strength, and we may know so much more than we do now, that we shall understand the things which, at present, seem difficult and strange to us.

If a child should receive a letter from his father, in which it should be said that something had happened to his little brother who was with his father, of a very strange kind, and difficult to be explained to the child; if, for example, he should be told that his little brother had been taken sick very suddenly, and seemed to be dying, and was restored in a very short time to health and strength, by a small black pill that a physician gave to him; he would believe it all, because he knew his father always told him the truth, although he could not possibly conceive how it was done. He would have no doubt that the pill cured his brother, though it would still appear to him very strange and difficult to be understood, how such a small thing could have so much power.

The father might say to him, 'you are not old enough to understand how this pill cured your brother;' or he might say, 'I have not time, or do not think it best to explain it to you now, I will do it when I come home.'

In either case the child would be perfectly

satisfied, if he really respected his father, and trusted in his always speaking the truth.

God, who is our heavenly father, has written a letter to us. It is the Bible. He tells us some things in it, the reasons for doing which, or the manner of doing them, we are not able to understand; or else God does not think it best to explain them to us. They may indeed appear to us very strange, and wonderful, and difficult, but this should not keep us a moment from believing that they have really happened, or that they will yet happen if God says so. We know that God is a God of truth; he cannot tell us what is not true; he keeps us in the dark with regard to some things, to try us, to see if we do indeed love him, and whether we are willing to trust in him, at all times, and with regard to all that he says and does.

In some way, then, which we cannot at present understand, God spake unto the fish, and the fish obeyed him, and cast out Jonah upon the dry land.

Very soon after this, (the Bible does not tell us exactly how soon,) "the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

God intended once more to try Jonah, and see if he was willing to obey his command. God did not change this command; it was just


as it was at first, without any thing altered in it, to make the duty less difficult or dangerous. Neither did God give Jonah any peculiar promises of protection. He did not say to him, ‘Go, and I will guard you against all troubles and danger, so that nobody shall do you any harm.’ He left Jonah to think and act for himself, and to show by his conduct, whether he could place an entire confidence in God. Possibly he might have to meet very great difficulties; he might be treated very severely by the Ninevites; he might be cast into prison, and confined in a dark and dismal dungeon; he might be tortured, so as to endure the most horrible pain; he might be put to death in the most cruel and excruciating manner.

He did not know but all this might happen to him, but the time was again come for him to decide whether he could give up every thing, even life itself, rather than disobey God, and lose his favour and friendship. Now, too, it would appear, whether all his cries for deliverance, while inside of the fish, were accompanied with any sincere sorrow for his sins; and especially for his so shamefully and wickedly endeavouring to run away from the performance of the same duty, that he is now again called upon to perform. He then made a solemn promise to worship God in his holy temple, and to show his gratitude for the deliverance which he so

earnestly desired, by offering up the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and paying his vows.

Was his late repentance such as it ought to be, and such as all true repentance ever is? Will it show itself in a cordial forsaking of the sin repented of, and in a ready and willing obedience to all that God requires? How can he fulfil the promise that he made, and go to the temple of the Lord, on his return to his own country, and worship God there in spirit and in truth, and hope to have his offerings accepted, and his prayers answered; and to obtain the blessings which he needs: if now so immediately after his wonderful deliverance, he should again suffer his fears to overcome him, and endeavour again to avoid the performance of the duty which is laid upon him by an express command of God?

It is not improbable, my dear children, that you may be placed at some future time in a situation as dangerous as that in which Jonah was, while inside of the fish. Perhaps *you have been already*, and can now look back and think how you felt and acted. Did you feel and act then, as you now are ready to say Jonah ought to have done? Did the goodness of God shown towards you in a deliverance from some trouble, or danger, or sickness, or from death itself, lead you to true repentance for your past sins, to the cordial forsaking of them, and to a ready and



willing obedience to all that God requires of you? You prayed, perhaps, (I hope you did,) that God would give you safety from the danger, or restoration from the sickness. You made very solemn promises of future gratitude and obedience. Your prayers were heard and answered; have your resolutions been kept? Have you offered up the sacrifices of thanksgiving in the way which I have explained to you, by loving God and your fellow-men, and endeavouring to do his will, by doing good to all around you?

Think of these things my dear children, and if you have not done as you ought, in times that are past, pray to God to enable you to do better in future. Pray that you may be enabled to imitate the example of Jonah, after he was delivered from the great danger in which he was.

For Jonah then *did as he ought*, and showed by his conduct, that his late repentance was indeed sincere. "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord."

He had no more hesitation; his obedience was cheerful and prompt; he did just as God directed him to do. How far he had to travel before he reached Nineveh, we do not know. Perhaps it was a long journey, but he hastened as fast as he could, and at length found himself there.



“ Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.” For recollect, I told you something of its size and magnificence, that it was fifty or sixty miles, (which might be called a journey of three days for a man on foot,) round the city; that it was surrounded with walls one hundred feet high, and that it probably contained five hundred thousand people.

There stood Jonah, the prophet of the Lord, at the gate of this great city. It was a very rich and powerful city; its king had a large army, and great wealth, and lived in a costly palace in much splendour. There were many other persons who also were very rich, and had magnificent houses, and ate the choicest food, and drank abundantly of wine, and were clothed in the richest dress, and had all that their hearts could wish. These, and the thousands poorer people, were all alike wicked, very wicked indeed; murderers, liars, robbers, idolaters. They had long delighted in this wickedness; it had become habitual to them; they encouraged each other in it; the people followed the example of their king; children imitated their parents; no one thought of reproving the rest, or of expressing any fear, lest their terrible wickedness should meet with some dreadful punishment.

Jonah had to encounter all those wicked

people. What would the king and his powerful soldiers, and his great men, and all the men, women, and youth say, when they heard a stranger preaching against them ; reproving them openly for their sins ; telling them that their idols were lying vanities ; teaching them about the only, true, and living God ; and denouncing against them the displeasure of this Almighty Being, and his terrible indignation for their wickedness ? How would they feel, and what would they do, when they should hear this unknown individual calling himself a prophet of the Lord, crying aloud, up and down their streets, and threatening them with the complete destruction of their whole city.

There stood Jonah in the gate, and we may well suppose that the danger which he anticipated rose up before him, in all its terror and vastness ; and that in the trembling anxiety of the moment, he offered up an earnest prayer to God for support, and strength, and fidelity in the discharge of his duty.

## CHAPTER XII.

**Jonah threatens the destruction of Nineveh in forty days.—The Ninevites have some hope of being spared if they repent.—Explanation of what is meant when the Bible speaks of God's repenting.—We should go to the Bible to get our knowledge of God and be satisfied with what it teaches us.**

**JONAH** entered the city in the discharge of his difficult, and as he thought, dangerous duty. We read in the Bible, that he "entered into it, a day's journey; and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

He lost no time in doing what God had commanded him to do. He did not wait a little while to see in what way he might begin to preach to the people with the most safety to himself. He boldly began his work, and walked about Nineveh, in its different roads and streets, the distance of twenty miles, or one day's journey; crying aloud, and telling the wicked inhabitants, that in forty days their city should all be destroyed.

He doubtless told them that he was sent by the true God, to deliver this message, and who the true God was. It is most probable too, that he explained to them the reason why God had thus threatened them with so dreadful a

calamity, and that it was on account of their great wickedness. He showed them the various ways in which they had been so wicked, notwithstanding they knew how to conduct themselves better. For there are no people, however ignorant, but what know that it is very wrong to lie, to murder, and to rob.

It is not unlikely also, that he pointed out to them the folly and the sin of idolatry, and told them how holy, and just, and good,—how wise and powerful the true God is—the God whom he and his people worshipped—the God who made all things, and whom they were bound to love and obey.

This God was Almighty, and could in an instant, by a terrible earthquake, or by fire sent down from heaven, utterly destroy them and their splendid city, and all that it contained. But he would not immediately bring on them this destruction. He threatened it however, at the end of forty days; and in the meanwhile, they must do as they thought they ought to do, placed in so alarming and trying a situation.

They were led, no doubt, to hope that by a deep and speedy repentance they might be spared. It is true, Jonah had not told them so; but they had some good reason to think that God might have mercy upon them. For by putting off the destruction of their city forty days, it seemed as if he was willing to wait and see whether they

would not humble themselves before him ; confess their great wickedness ; resolve to forsake it, and implore his forgiveness.

God does thus often spare sinners, if they will be truly sorry for their sins, and begin to love and obey him, although he has threatened the most dreadful judgments against them. He himself tells us, in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah, the seventh and eighth verses : *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it : if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

This shows how full God is of compassion towards the guilty, if they will but become penitent, and turn from their wickedness. *He will repent of the evil,*—of the dreadful punishment that their sins deserve,—and which he had denounced against them. This does not mean that God will repent in the same manner that a sinner repents, when he feels sorry for his sins, and resolves to forsake them. God is perfectly holy, free from all sin—from the smallest degree of it. *He cannot sin.* We cannot think of his sinning. If he could sin, he would cease to be the true God whom the Bible describes to us. He would be like the false gods and idols which the heathen worship ; who, they suppose have

committed all kinds of wickedness. He would not be worthy of our confidence. How could we love and obey him ?

The Bible speaks of *God's repenting*. What does this mean ? I will endeavour to explain it to you.

When a sinner repents, he not only feels sorry for his sins, because he has been in danger of suffering the punishment which is due to them, but still more, because they have been committed against a holy, wise, and just Being, who has been very good to him, and whom he ought to love and obey. He regards sin differently from what he did before. He sees that sin is a very great evil. It is opposed to God. It causes a great deal of misery. It will make all who do not repent of it miserable for ever. He begins to hate all kinds of sin. Formerly he loved and committed sin. Now he resolves to sin no more ; he resolves to love God and to obey his commands ; and he beseeches God to enable him to do this. His thoughts and feelings have undergone a *great change* ; and his *conduct undergoes a great change also*. Many things which he loved greatly to do, he now does no more. Many things which he could not bear to do, he now does willingly and cheerfully, and with all his heart, because he loves to do them.

How do we know that this great change has taken place in his thoughts and feelings, in his

purposes and desires. We cannot look into his mind and heart and see what is going on there.

We think that this great change has taken place, because we see him *conducting himself so differently*; and we conclude that this different conduct proceeds from purposes and desires very different from those which he had before. We say, *he has repented of his sins*.

God shows himself to us in what he has made, and what he does. We cannot see God. We cannot see his purposes and desires as they are in his mind. We can only conclude what these purposes and desires are, from what God does, or from what he tells us he has done, or will yet do.

He does a great many things, and very different things, at different times. When we speak of the different things that he does, we are obliged to speak of them *in the same words* which we use, when we speak of the various things which *we and other persons do*. We have no other words that we can use.

Besides this (which I wish you very particularly to notice) we are obliged to *think of what God does, as we think of what men do*. For we are acquainted with no other way of doing things than the way in which men do them.

When we say, God *made* the sun, we use the same word which we use when we say, a man *made* a table. We think of a man's making a

table, by his resolving to make one ; by his considering how he will make it ; by his using the strength which he has to make it ; and by his taking the wood *out of which* to make it, and employing the instruments *with which* to make it.

Now, when we say, God made the sun ; we think of *his resolving* to make it ; of *his considering* how to make it ; and of *his using his power* to make it. There we stop. We do not attempt to think *out of what* God made the sun, or *in what way* he made it. For of this we can know nothing. And even when we think of his resolving, and considering, and using his power, and speak of him as doing this, we do not mean that he resolves, and considers, and uses *his power exactly as we do ours*. We only mean that he does it *in some such way* ; and that his power causes things to be made, or to happen, as certain things are made, or take place, after we have resolved and considered and used our power, that they may be made or take place.

When we read in the Bible, then, that *God repents of any thing*, we must not think of his doing this as we think of a man's doing it, when we say *a man repents of his sins*.

A man repents, and there is a great change in his thoughts and feelings, his purposes and desires. This change shows itself *in what he does*, in his doing very differently from what he



did before. His conduct leads us to conclude, that a great change has taken place in his mind and heart. We say, that *he has repented*.

God changes *his conduct*. He treats a person, or a whole nation, very differently from what He did before; or from what He threatened to do, if they continued in their wickedness. He does them good instead of doing them evil. We say, that *God has repented*.

A kind father has, sometimes, to threaten his child with very severe punishment, if he continue to do a certain thing. The child ceases to do it, and shows that he is sorry for having done it, and that he means to do so no more. The father does not inflict the punishment; he treats the child with affection and kindness. While the child was disobedient, the father treated him in a way to show his great displeasure. Now, there is a *great change in the father's treatment of the child*.

We speak of this change. It is so great, that we wish to speak of it in strong language, and we say, the father *repented of the punishment* with which he threatened the child. He almost seemed to *feel sorry*, that he had ever threatened it at all.

God *changes his conduct towards a person or nation*. He treats them very differently from what he had threatened to do, while they were going on in sin. We wish to speak of this great

change in the conduct of God, in strong language; and we say, *God repented of the evil.*

God repented of the evil; and there was a great change in his conduct, as there is in the conduct of the sinner, when he repents. But we must be careful to remember that God did not feel sorry as if he had felt and done wrong, as the sinner feels, when he repents.

God repented of the evil; and there was a great change in his conduct, as there is in the conduct of a kind father, when he repents of the punishment which he threatened against the disobedient, but now penitent and obedient, child. But we must be careful to remember, that God did not feel sorry for having denounced the evil against the sinful person, or nation, in the same way that the father did. The father might feel, that perhaps he had been a little too severe in his threatenings. The threatenings of God are always just and right.

We must also be careful to remember, that when we read, in the Bible, *God repented of the evil*; and, when this leads us to think that there was a very great change in his conduct, we must not suppose that there was such a change in *the mind of God*, in his purposes and desires, as takes place in *us*, when we change greatly *our* conduct.

What takes place in God's mind, when He repents of any evil that he has threatened, we

cannot distinctly imagine. We can form no clear ideas about it. It may be something resembling the change that takes place in our purposes and desires. It may be very much, or almost entirely, unlike it. Let us be very careful, my dear children, how we speak of the great and holy God, and how we think of him, too.

What can we, who are like the worms of the dust, know of that Being who has lived from all eternity, and will live for ever ; who knows all things that have ever happened, or will ever happen ; who made, and takes care of all beings and things ; who governs all beings and things ; who has infinite wisdom and power, and can do whatever he pleases, and whenever he pleases to do it ?

What can we know of God, except what he has taught us about himself, in the Bible ? Men try to find out things about God in other ways, by the strength of their own minds ; by their own thoughts and feelings ; by making God such a being as man is. But they fall into great mistakes and errors.

Let us not do so, my dear children. Let us go to the Bible to learn about God. Let us pray to God, to enable us to understand it. Let us compare one part of the Bible with another. Let us try to find out the meaning of the language which the Bible uses, when speak-

ing of God. When we have found out this meaning, there let us stop. We cannot find out more, if we try. God has told us all that it was necessary, or best for us to know. For this let us be thankful. With this let us be satisfied. Let us believe, love, and obey the plain, simple, truths which God has taught us in his word, and not try *to be wise above what is written.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

*If the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, how great will be the condemnation of those who repent not at the preaching of Jesus Christ.—What this condemnation is.—God is good, in punishing the impenitent.*

**THE** preaching of Jonah had an immediate effect upon the people of Nineveh. It is very remarkable that it had. Wicked people are not often willing to listen to those who tell them of their wickedness, and of the punishment which it justly deserves. They more generally turn away from such reproof, and endeavour to forget it, and to think that their wickedness is not very great. They love to continue in it, and therefore find excuses for it. Or, if they begin to fear that it may draw down upon them the displeasure of God, and expose them to his judgments, they think that these judgments will not yet come upon them, and that they may put off repentance for some time longer.

But the people of Nineveh felt very differently. They believed, that all that Jonah said was true. They knew, that their wickedness had been very great indeed. Their memory spread it all before them. Their conscience

accused them, and filled their hearts with the deepest remorse. They saw, that they could not excuse themselves, or make their guilt appear to be a small matter. They felt that it was so great, that it truly deserved not only the punishment which Jonah had threatened, but a great deal more.

They had probably heard of the Hebrews, to which nation they understood Jonah belonged. They had probably heard of much that the God of the Hebrews had done for them; of the miracles that he had wrought in their behalf; of the victories that he had enabled them to gain over their enemies; of his driving out the heathen from Canaan; of his giving the Hebrews that delightful and fertile country; and of his continuing to protect and bless them.

It is very probable, also, that Jonah told them of his own wonderful deliverance, by the power of that God whom he worshipped, from the dreadful danger which threatened him, when cast overboard by the mariners, and afterwards, while inside of the fish.

The Ninevites could not but compare the God of the Hebrews, and of Jonah, with their own gods. They could not but see the immense difference between them; how the one was almighty, and the others utterly weak and powerless. They acknowledged, that the God of the Hebrews was the only true and living

God. They believed his threatenings. They feared before him, and trembled at the prospect of his terrible indignation against their sins.

You have been taught a great deal about the true God, my dear children. The smallest of you knew much more of Him, than the wisest of the Ninevites did. You have not been left to worship idols, as they did ; and as many of the poor ignorant heathen do, at the present day. You know, too, what God has threatened against you, if you continue in sin ; if you do not repent of it, and forsake it, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love and obey God. He has not threatened, indeed, to destroy the place in which you live, as he did to destroy the city of the Ninevites. But you know the still more dreadful punishment which he threatens, in the future world, against all who continue disobedient and impenitent !

Are you still disobedient to God, and impenitent ; going on in sin, and not feeling at all sorry for it ? Think of the people of Nineveh. They repented at the preaching of Jonah, but a greater person than Jonah has been sent to preach to you, and to warn you to repent of all your sins. That person is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.. He has truly preached to you ; for he has directed and taught his apostles to write down his sayings in the Bible, so that you might read and understand them.

And you can do this, just as well as if you had heard them from his own lips.

A father, if he was at a distance, could write a letter to his son, and reprove him if he had done wrong; and advise him to do better; and tell him, that if he did not feel sorry for what he had done, and ask forgiveness, and love and obey his father in future, he must expect, and should certainly receive, a very severe punishment. The father could write all this, and when the son read the letter, he could understand and believe it; he could think and feel just exactly *as if his father was present and speaking to him.*

In the same way Jesus Christ speaks to you in the Bible. He is calling upon you to repent of all your sins, and to believe in Him, and be forgiven; that you may avoid that terrible punishment in the future world which God denounces against those who continue in sin and impenitence.

Hear the very words of Jesus Christ. *He that believeth on the Son,—*(that is, he that trusts in Christ as his only Saviour, and feels the need of trusting in him, because he is a miserable, guilty sinner,) *he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;* (he shall live for ever in heaven, and be eternally holy and happy there;) *and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life;* (shall never enter into heaven;) *but the wrath of God abideth on him.*



*Always to have the wrath of God abiding on us!* This is dreadful indeed. How unhappy a disobedient child feels, when he sees that his father is displeased with him, and is about to punish him severely; and when he sees that his displeasure continues, and that the punishment does not cease, and that it is even to become more severe, he feels more unhappy, and is wretched indeed.

But what is the displeasure of a father, compared with the displeasure of God? The child's sins against a father are very small, compared with his sins against God. Indeed, *all his sins are sins against God*. How great and dreadful will be the punishment which God will inflict upon those who disobey him, and continue impenitent, compared with the punishment which a father inflicts upon his child. The Bible tells us it will be so. Jesus Christ himself tells us, as you have just seen, that the sinner who continues impenitent, *must for ever feel the wrath of God*; it abideth on him, it will ever abide on him.

Think of these things, my dear children. Think of the people of Nineveh; they repented at the preaching of Jonah; a greater person than Jonah has preached to you, and is still preaching to you. Suppose he should tell you that in forty days, the place in which you live, yourselves, and all the inhabitants, should be utterly

destroyed by a tremendous earthquake; how would you feel? what would you do? would you not repent, and beseech God, for the sake of Christ, to forgive you, and save you from destruction? Would you not hope, as the people of Nineveh did, that in this way you might obtain mercy?

A more terrible punishment awaits you if you continue in sin and impenitence. God does not threaten that it shall come upon you at the end of forty days. But suppose it does not; suppose you live much longer than forty days; suppose you live forty years, or even twice as long, eighty years, these will soon be gone, they are like days, yes, they are like hours, like moments, when compared with the long, long, never-ending years of eternity. The eighty years of a short life will soon be gone, then death comes, the soul leaves the body, it goes to the judgment. Is it still disobedient and impenitent; then *the wrath of God abideth on it for ever.*

It is strong language to speak of *the anger, or of the wrath of God.* It does not mean that the wrath of God is like the wrath of a very angry man, who looks furiously, and utters loud and fierce words, and seems like a raging lion, ready to tear in pieces the person with whom he is angry.

God does not feel so. His displeasure against

sin is great indeed, but there is nothing in God that is fierce and furious. He is holy, and just, and good in all that he does. Yes, he is good when he is displeased against sin, and when he inflicts the most dreadful punishment upon the sinner who continues impenitent.

That father is good who inflicts punishment upon his disobedient child; and if this child goes on in disobedience, and utterly disregards the advice, the reproofs, and the punishments of the parent, and sets his authority at defiance, and refuses to respect and obey him, the father is right in banishing him from his house, and leaving him to meet with the wretchedness and ruin of his own choosing. The father, too, is *good in doing so*; good and kind to all the rest of the children, and to the family. For how miserable the family would be, how miserable all families would be, if the father, who is the head of the family, is not respected and obeyed. Surely if he exercises no authority over a disobedient, ungrateful, and rebellious child; if he lets him alone, to go on in his disobedience and rebellion, and by his wicked example, probably lead the other children to become disobedient and rebellious also, he would not be acting as a good and kind father!

In the same way, God is good and kind, as well as holy and just, in punishing severely the sinner who holds out against his authority, who

will not respect and obey him, who continues ungrateful, rebellious, and impenitent.

If God did not punish such sinners, but permitted them to go on in their wickedness ; if the Bible should tell us that the wicked would never be punished at all, but that they would go to heaven after death, and be happy there for ever ; what a miserable and wretched world this would soon be : bad persons would commit all kinds of wickedness, and if they could do it without being found out, they would have nothing to fear in the future world.

Besides, if God, who is so holy, just, and good, did not think it right and best to punish the wicked, *would it be right for men to do it ?* Would it be right for parents to punish their disobedient children ? Would it be right for a teacher of a school to punish, in any way, the pupil who would not submit to his rules ? Would it be right to have any prisons, and to confine the persons in them who steal, and rob, and do injury to others ?

Then what a miserable world we should have ; what unhappiness in families ; what disorder in schools ; what confusion, violence, and wretchedness every-where !

No, my dear children, God is good and kind in punishing the sinner who continues disobedient and impenitent, and in punishing him severely. When it is said that *the wrath of*

*God abideth on him*, it means that the displeasure of God against him is so great, that the punishment inflicted on him, and which will show this displeasure, will be dreadful indeed. Dreadful indeed, somewhat like the effects of wrath, or very great anger in a man who inflicts some terrible pain or suffering upon the person who has made him angry.

Repent of all your sins, my dear children: trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you; pray to God to lead you to love and obey him. If you do not, if you continue impenitent, then at the day of judgment, the Ninevites will rise up and condemn you. Their conduct will show how just God will be in condemning you. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater than Jonah has preached to you, and warned you to flee from the wrath to come.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

The king hears of Jonah's threatenings.—He clothes himself in sackcloth.—He and his nobles decree that there shall be a general fast.

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh, (by the decree of the king and his nobles,) saying, “Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”

It seems that some who heard Jonah, went and told the king what a terrible calamity God had threatened against their city. The king



listened to it with deep and fearful attention. Like the people whom he governed, he knew that the punishment would be just. He trembled before the true and living God, the God whose Almighty power, as Jonah declared, was to be exercised in the destruction of himself and his people. He arose from his throne, where he was sitting in great splendour, to receive the persons, who came unto him. He had little expected to hear from them such an unwelcome message. He laid his robe from him, the rich dress which he wore, and which showed that he was a king, and had great power and authority, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

By leaving his throne, a seat on which only kings sit, and by putting off his robe, the emblem of authority, he meant to humble himself in the sight of God. He meant to acknowledge by this conduct that he was unworthy of sitting on that throne, and of wearing that robe; that he had not acted as a good king in seeing that his people did what was right, and kept from violence, and robbery, and murder; that he had himself done what a good king ought never to do,—encouraged his people in their wickedness by his own bad example; and that he really did not deserve to be a king any longer.

To show too, his very great sorrow for his past wickedness, and his deep humility in the sight of

God, and in the presence of his people, he put on a very coarse kind of dress, called sackcloth, and sat down among the ashes.

You have seen those who have lost their friends by death, put on a black dress, called mourning. This, you know, is done as a mark of their sorrow. It is an emblem of grief.

Among the Jews, and among other nations in Asia, at the time when Jonah lived, it was customary also to have a mark or emblem of sorrow. They put on sackcloth when they were deeply afflicted, and wished to show that their grief was great. This sackcloth was usually made of goat's hair, and was very coarse and rough. It was of a dark or black colour. It was made into a garment, like a sack, with merely holes for the arms, and was thrown over the person, and reached down below the knees. In this dress the afflicted person often sat down in the midst of ashes, and had his head covered all over with them.

You will find in the First Book of Kings, the twenty-first chapter and twenty-seventh verse, how Ahab, a very wicked king of Israel, rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly, or walked in a slow and humble manner. He did this to show his sorrow at the threatenings which Elijah the prophet, uttered against him, on account of his great wickedness.

At the beginning also of the first chapter in Esther, you will see how Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry. He did this to show his great grief at the order of Ahasuerus, the king of the country where he and many other Jews lived, to kill them all, men, women, and children, on a certain day.

We read also in the Bible, how Job in his great distress sat down among the ashes; and he tells us that he sewed sackcloth upon his body.

This custom may appear strange to us, but it was not so among the people who practised it. We have customs that would appear strange to other people who do not practise them, and who should be told of them. And indeed almost every nation has customs peculiar to itself, and quite different from those which other nations have.

The king of Nineveh thought that something more must be done than for himself alone to be humbled before God, and to show his great sorrow for his wickedness. All the people had sinned; the destruction of the whole city was threatened; and all should repent of their wickedness, and humble themselves before God, to avoid, if possible, his awful judgments.

The king called together his nobles,—the

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great and powerful men, who aided him in governing the people; some of whom commanded his armies, and others attended to the different kinds of business which he had to do. He often used to call them together, and especially when there was any great difficulty or danger;—to hear their advice, and to have them assist him in deciding what was best to be done.

Now, the difficulty and danger were very great indeed, and the king quickly sent for his nobles, who came together, probably in the palace where he lived, to hear what he had to say to them.

Most, if not all of them knew the reason of their assembling. Some of them had already heard Jonah crying out in the streets of the city, and threatening its destruction; and others had been told of it by those who had heard him. For you may easily imagine that the alarm would be spread very rapidly. Many as soon as they saw and heard Jonah, would run to tell others the dreadful news; and in a short time, every body would know something about it.

The nobles came together at the summons of the king, in great fear and sorrow. And how much this fear and sorrow must have been increased, when they met him! He was not sitting on his throne, as he usually did, when he called them together, with his crown on his

head, and clad in his rich and splendid robes; and looking round proudly and boldly upon them, as the great and powerful king of a great and powerful people; and expecting that they would approach him with every mark of respect, (probably by bowing themselves the whole length of their bodies before him) and then standing in silent attention to hear what he had to say to them.

No; they were astonished to see their king covered with sackcloth, and sitting in ashes, sorrowful and trembling. It was a strange sight; *his fear* increased theirs, and great sadness and consternation filled the whole assembly.

The Bible does not tell us what the king said to the nobles on this occasion. He, doubtless told them how greatly he was alarmed, and that he thought *Jonah* was a prophet sent to them by the true God. He probably, too, spoke of his own great wickedness and that of his people; and told them how much *this* wickedness deserved the judgment that was threatened against them. He called upon them, to unite with him in humbling themselves before God, and in commanding all the inhabitants of Nineveh to do it, in a public and solemn manner; hoping that in this way they might obtain mercy of God and be spared.

It seems that the nobles thought and felt as the king did, and agreed that it was very proper and important that what he advised should be done. So the king, with his nobles, *made a decree*; that is, they determined that a certain thing should be done by all the people; that the people should be told of this, as the positive command of the king and nobles; that the proper persons having authority under the king, should see that this command was strictly obeyed; and that all persons who did not obey it should be punished.

The decree was, that for a certain time, (probably for one day,) neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, should taste anything; neither feed, nor drink water. It was also ordered, that man and beast should be covered with sackcloth. I do not suppose that this means, that *every one* of the beasts was to be covered with sackcloth, but that all those must be which belonged to the rich and great persons, and which usually had some kind of cloth, or gay ornaments upon them, to show the wealth and distinction of their owners.

In this way, by covering not only themselves with sackcloth, but even the beasts, it was intended that the Ninevites should shew the strongest marks of their humbling themselves before God. The beasts, it is true, did not know why they were covered with sackcloth, instead of the

beautiful trappings which they usually wore; but *their owners did*; and as much was shown by this expression of sorrow, as by the sackcloth which they themselves wore. The gay ornaments on the animals which they rode about the city, or which drew them in their chariots were, as well as their own rich and splendid dress, the marks of their wealth and distinction. They had showed their pride quite as much by the *one* as by the *other*; and now it was intended, that they should show their humility by laying aside *both*, and covering themselves and their animals with the same emblem of sorrow.

The animals too, were to have no food nor water during the day. The inhabitants of the city were to spend no time in taking care of them, but to devote it all to humbling themselves before God, confessing their sins to him, heartily repenting of them, and praying for pardon and mercy. By this universal fasting of men, women, and children, and of all their animals, it was intended to show how universal their guilt was, and that their very beasts, as it were, had been partakers of this guilt; because they had belonged to these wicked people, and had been used by them, while engaged in their wickedness.

I do not think it necessary, that when we fast, to shew our sorrow for sin, we should make the animals which belong to us fast also. God

does not require this. It is proper to feed and water them, and also to give nourishment to children, and to sick and feeble persons. But the Ninevites thought differently; and, although they did not think, perhaps, exactly right about it, it shewed the sincerity and the depth of their sorrow. I suppose, too, that fasting for one day would not do any lasting injury to their animals. It often happens, that wild animals in the woods go without eating or drinking anything for a longer time than one day.

It was also decreed by the king and nobles, that the people should cry mightily unto God; and that they should turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands; that they should do wickedly no more, and that the violent things, the quarrelling, the fighting, the stealing, the robbing, the murdering, in which their hands had been employed, should all cease.

This decree of the king and nobles of Nineveh, shows how they trembled at the threatenings of Jonah; how well they knew that their wickedness had been very great; how deeply they felt, that they justly deserved the awful judgments of God, and that they had no hope of escape, but in his mercy alone. It shews also how strongly they desired, that the sorrow of themselves and the people might shew itself to come from the heart, and to be something more



than the mere fear of punishment. For they knew, that while persons continue in sin, they cannot feel sorry for it ; and that every one who feels true sorrow for his sins, will immediately begin to forsake them, and to do what God requires of him.

## CHAPTER XV.

The people are directed to pray, as well as to fast.—They willingly obey the decree.—A great change in their conduct.—God spares Nineveh.—The duty of fasting, and of having seasons of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer.

It was a part of the decree of the king and nobles, that praying to God should be united with the fasting. The people were required *to cry mightily unto God*; to cry from their hearts, feeling deeply their guilt and their danger; to cry aloud with their voice, as persons are ready to do, when they are sensible of some great danger that threatens them, and that they must obtain help speedily, or be destroyed.

The fasting was to prepare them thus to pray the more earnestly and feelingly. Great grief often destroys the appetite. Persons who feel a great deal of sorrow, will not care about eating and drinking. On the other hand, to go for some time without food, aids us in feeling truly sorry for our sins. It keeps the mind awake and clear, so that we can think the better how guilty we have been in the sight of God; and confess more fully all our wickedness; and pray the better for pardon, and that we may be

kept from sinning in future. While a person is trying to do this, if he sits down and eats and drinks as much as he wants, he will find, in almost all cases, that his attention and feelings become very different from what they would have been, if he had continued to go without food.

Fasting is something more than a mere outward expression, or mark of sorrow. It is one of the best means of preparing the heart and the mind to be humbled before God, deeply to repent of sin, and earnestly to cry unto God for forgiveness, and for a disposition to love and obey him. Very young persons, however, or those who are sick and feeble; or those whose health requires it; may not be able to go without food. In such cases they ought to take nourishment. Their repentance may be equally as sincere, although not accompanied with the outward expression of it.

The king and the nobles told the people in the decree, that if they would all thus humble themselves before God, and show that their fasting and their prayers were sincere, by immediately forsaking their wickedness, then there might be some hope of their deliverance from the destruction with which they were threatened. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

You remember, my dear children, that I have

explained to you what is meant, when we speak of God's repenting, or of his being angry; and it may be well for you to read it over again, if you do not recollect it all distinctly.

The king and nobles hoped, that if they truly repented of their sins, God would treat them all very differently from what he had threatened, and that his terrible displeasure would not come upon them.

The king caused the decree to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh. He sent many of his officers, probably on horseback, through all the roads and streets of the city, to tell the people what himself and the nobles thought it was best to do, and what they commanded to be done by all the inhabitants.

The people heard the decree, and all felt that it was just and right. They prepared to obey it. It took them some little while to get every thing ready for the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer; but soon the preparations were made, and when the time came which the king had appointed, they were all of them, and the animals too, which they used in riding, covered with sackcloth.

How sorrowful the whole city must have appeared! It would be a sad sight to you, my dear children, to see all the men, women, and children, and all the horses too, in the place where you live, clothed in mourning. How ther

must all have felt in the great city of Nineveh, to look round and see its numerous inhabitants, and its thousands of horses and camels, all covered with the emblems of grief.

It was a mournful day for them. They took no food nor drink. They prayed alone, and in their families; and I think it probable, that they also went into their temples, and there cried mightily unto God, to have mercy on them. Many of them, we have reason to believe, felt truly sorry for their sins, and confessed them to God, and besought him to forgive them, and to enable them to forsake their sins, and do what was right and pleasing in his sight.

There was a great change after this in the conduct of the Ninevites. A great many among them ceased from outward wickedness, and some continued to worship and obey the true God. How many of them truly loved God, and desired to be holy and freed from all sin, and loved their neighbours as they did themselves, we cannot tell. But probably not a few did; and throughout the whole city there was scarcely any violence, any quarrelling or fighting, any stealing, robbing, or murder, to be seen. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Nineveh was not destroyed at that time. God

spared it ; and in this, and a great many other ways, he shews us how full he is of compassion, how ready he is to have mercy upon those who will forsake their sins, and do what he commands.

We see, too, how important it is, not only that individuals, or single persons, should humble themselves before God on account of their sins, but that the inhabitants of a city, or of a whole country, should do it. We have all of us, my dear children, reason to repent of our own peculiar sins, which we have committed alone by ourselves. It is proper too that we should have seasons of fasting and prayer *for ourselves, individually* ; that we may look back upon our past lives, and examine our hearts and conduct, and see what we have thought, felt, said, or done, contrary to the commands of God ; at such a time we should confess our sins, and implore forgiveness ; and beseech God to give us a strong faith in Jesus Christ, that we may trust in this Saviour, and love him, and obey his precepts, and imitate his example. Many good people, in the course of their lives, have such seasons of private fasting and prayer ; and they find them seasons in which they obtain more humility ; more sorrow for sin ; more desire to be like God and Christ ; a stronger belief that God is their friend, and that his Son is indeed their Saviour ; more peace of mind ; and a better preparation

for doing their duty in this world, and for the joys of heaven in the next.

But besides our individual sins, there are other sins which *we unite together* in committing. Sometimes, all the people who live in a city, or country, commit sins which are public and common. They do not keep the Sabbath as they ought. Intemperance, profane swearing, and other kinds of wickedness abound. Good people do not set such an example to others as they ought to do, nor endeavour to shew them the folly and the danger of their wickedness, and lead them to love and obey God. And so all the people in the city, or in the whole country, become very sinful; and their wickedness, like that of Nineveh, comes up before God; and his judgments are ready to overtake them.

They need, as the Ninevites did, to humble themselves before God. It is their duty to have *a season of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer*, in which all should unite. The sins of which they are to repent are common ones, that all have either committed, or suffered to go on without doing what they could to prevent them. The danger to which they are exposed, is a common one. They may all suffer together, under the just and terrible displeasure of God.

When there are such seasons of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer; remember, my dear children, that, in Nineveh, they all united in

humbling themselves before God, from the greatest of them, *even to the least of them*. All ages, the old and the young, the grand-parents, the parents, and the children, united in it. If you are old enough to understand what is meant by sinning against God, then you are old enough to know that you ought to repent of your sins. You are old enough to unite with others, in humbling yourselves before God, in seasons of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer. When there are such seasons, remember that *your sins* have added to the whole number of sins of which the people have been guilty. You come in for *your share* of the guilt, and are exposed, with others, to the just judgments of God. You should, therefore, unite with them, in fasting and prayer, and in repentance for sins; and in beseeching God to pardon all the people, and to have mercy on them.

The Jews had a solemn fast, *once every year*. You can read about it in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, from the twenty-sixth verse to the thirty-third. They then confessed their sins, and humbled themselves before God.

We read too, in the Bible, of other occasions when there were public fasts. In the twentieth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, you will see, that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, proclaimed a fast throughout all the country over which he reigned. He published a decree, as



the king and nobles at Nineveh did, and commanded all his people to unite with him, in fasting, humiliation and prayer. The reason of it was, that the people who lived in another country, and who were the enemies of the Jews, came, with great armies, to fight and destroy them. Jehoshaphat feared. He knew, as the king of Nineveh did, that he and his people had been wicked, and that it would be just in God to leave them to be destroyed by their enemies. But he hoped, that they might obtain the pardon of their sins, and the protection of God, and he called upon his people to come up to Jerusalem, the city where he lived, and there keep the fast with him and the inhabitants of that place. They did so, and we read, that "all Judah," (all the people of that country,) "stood before the Lord, with *their little ones*, their wives, and their children." They stood together, in the house of the Lord, and Jehoshaphat stood there before them, and prayed unto God for deliverance.

God heard their prayer, and delivered them from their enemies ; just as he saved the Ninevites after their season of fasting, humiliation and prayer.

In the eighth chapter of Ezra, at the twenty-first verse, you will see, that he proclaimed a fast. See if you cannot find out the reason of his doing this, and what was the consequence

of his fasting, and the people who were with him.

After the Jews came back from their captivity to their own country, they had a very solemn season of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, an account of which you can read in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah.

David also fasted, when his child was sick, of which you can read in the second book of Samuel, the twelfth chapter, and the fifteenth verse.

In the ninth chapter of Daniel, you will see how he fasted. He says, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." He did this, while his countrymen, the Jews, were in captivity, and he besought God to have mercy on them.

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, at the sixteenth verse, Christ gives us some directions about fasting, which shew that he intended that his disciples' should sometimes fast. And we read that they did so, in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, at the third verse; and also in the fourteenth chapter, at the twenty-third verse.

In the fifth chapter of Luke, at the thirty-fifth verse, Christ says that the days would come when he should be taken from his disciples, and that then they should fast. And it

was true, that after he ascended to heaven, his followers had many and great trials, and in the midst of their afflictions, fasted, and humbled themselves before God. Paul tells us that he did so, in the eleventh chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, at the twenty-seventh verse. He says he was "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, *in fastings often*, in cold and nakedness."

I have been particular, as you see, my dear children, in telling you about the subject of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. I have pointed out to you some of the places in the Bible where you can read about it, which I hope you will not fail to do. And I have done all this, that you may always remember the examples of the Jews of old, and of the disciples of Christ, and how important it is, both for individuals, and for a whole people, at proper times, to humble themselves before God, on account of their sins.

If the ignorant Ninevites, who were heathen, saw and felt the need of a season of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, how much more ought we to see and feel the need of it; we, who have been taught so much better than they, what our duty is; and who, both as individuals, and as a people, have committed so many sins that deserve the displeasure and judgments of God.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Jonah is very angry that the Ninevites are to be spared.—Reasons of his feeling so.—God's expostulation with Jonah.—We should never feel ashamed while doing our duty.—Jonah goes out of the city, builds a booth, and sits under it to wait and see the fate of Nineveh.—God prepares a gourd to overshadow Jonah.

WHEN Jonah heard the decree of the king and nobles, and saw the preparation of the Ninevites to obey it, he began to think that they had indeed resolved to humble themselves before God. He soon witnessed their fasting, humiliation, and prayer, and the very great change which took place in their conduct. He saw that the sorrow of many of them was sincere, and that most probably their prayers would be heard and answered, and their city saved from destruction. This was what he had in some degree expected. He supposed it possible that they might be alarmed at the threatenings which he uttered against them, and repent, and turn from their evil ways. He thought if they did, that they would obtain pardon and mercy of God; for he knew that God was full of compassion, and ready to forgive, and that, in many instances, he had spared the penitent, although

very severe judgments had been threatened against them, while continuing in their sins.

It happened, as Jonah expected it might ; God determined not to destroy Nineveh at that time ; and it is not unlikely, that he told Jonah, how it repented him of the evil which he had said he would do unto them, and that he would not do it.

We should suppose that Jonah would be greatly rejoiced to hear this. He had just been himself delivered from the most awful danger, and from the terrible judgments of God, to which his sins had exposed him. He had cried to God for mercy in the greatest distress. He had repented of his wickedness, and made solemn vows to God of future obedience. His prayers were heard ; he was rescued from destruction.

We should suppose that he would sympathize with the poor, ignorant, sinful Ninevites, and consider that if their sins were great, his had been great also ; and, that if God had spared him who knew so well what his duty was ; he would also, in the exercise of the same compassion, spare a people, who had not enjoyed any thing like the same means of instruction with himself. We should suppose that Jonah would feel most deeply for their situation, and be full of joy at the sure prospect of their deliverance.

As soon as he felt certain that they would be spared, we should suppose that he would show his joy, and tell them of it, and encourage them

to keep on in their course of obedience to the commands of God.

Happy Jonah ! to witness this surprising effect of his preaching ; to see the inhabitants of a great city, so lately full of all kinds of wickedness, humbling themselves before God, and turning from the evil of their ways, and saved, by the mercy of God, from destruction. How happy other preachers would be, to witness similar effects of *their labours* ; to see sinners, in great numbers, repenting of their sins, and forsaking them, and doing what God requires.

But alas ! Jonah, for some strange reason, felt very differently from all this. Instead of rejoicing at the prospect of the Ninevites being spared, *it displeased him exceedingly, and he was very angry.* “ And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country ? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live.”

We find out, now, one thing which kept Jonah from going to Nineveh, when God first commanded him to go there. He thought, *at that time*, that God might possibly spare the Ninevites, knowing how full of compassion he

always is towards those who are truly penitent, and who forsake their wickedness. He thought that if this should happen, he might be considered as *a false prophet* ; as having threatened what would never come to pass. His pride made him feel that this would be disgraceful to him, and expose him to the ridicule of the Ninevites, and of his own people, when he should return home.

Now he finds himself, as he supposes, in this very situation. He is always willing that the poor Ninevites should all be destroyed, rather than he suffer any thing in the opinion of others, as a true prophet of the Lord. He forgets that God told him what to do, and that it is always safe to obey the commands of God ; yes, that it is the highest honour of man to obey them, and that *there is no disgrace so great, as not obeying them*. He forgets that God will take care of his own honour, and that if God does not disgrace himself by repenting of the evil which he threatens against the wicked, when they repent and forsake their wickedness, a man, such as he is, need not consider it any disgrace to be the messenger of God, and to tell the wicked what the threatenings of God are. He forgets, too, what a sinner he himself has been, and that, of all persons in the world, he is one of the last that should have any thing like pride. What, indeed, had Jonah to be proud of ?

He forgets all this. He is exceedingly displeased, and very angry. He seems ready to justify himself in having before fled to Tarshish, and in a very murmuring and disrespectful manner, says, he then knew that what he feared, would probably take place. And since it has taken place, it is too much for him to bear; he would rather die than be so much mortified and disgraced, he very foolishly and wickedly beseeches God to take him away from this mortification and disgrace, by causing his death. "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live."

It is very probable, also, that Jonah felt thus strongly, because he thought that the Ninevites might receive more favour from God, *than even his own people the Jews*. He knew that the Jews had been guilty of so much sin, that they were exposed to the just displeasure of God. Whether they would repent, as the Ninevites did, was quite doubtful. They might be cut off, as a nation, while the people of Nineveh would be spared, and become great, powerful and happy. Here would be an additional mortification and disgrace, which, as a Jew, he would feel very deeply; and he had rather die than endure it.

The reproof which God gave to Jonah, was a very gentle one, considering the sinful feel-



ings which he indulged, and the disrespectful and presumptuous language that he used. "Then said the Lord, doest thou well to be angry?"

God intended by this question, to lead Jonah to think seriously on the folly and wickedness of his anger, and to see that there was no good reason for it. His own conscience, if permitted to speak, would furnish the most severe reproof, and convince him that instead of doing well, he was doing very ill to be angry. *To be angry*, because God was good, and the penitent Ninevites to be saved from destruction! What a selfish hard-hearted man it showed him to be. *To be angry*, because it seemed to him, that some dishonour might happen to himself, or to the Jewish nation! what a proud spirit he had; what a want of confidence in the wisdom and power of God, as if God would not take care of his own honour, and do all things in the best manner!

*Doest thou well to be angry?* When you feel angry, my dear children, ask yourselves this same question. Stop a little, and think what it is that causes you anger. *Why* do you feel angry? *Against whom* do you feel angry? Can you give *any good reason* for being angry? In almost every case you will find, that like Jonah, you have no good reason for indulging such a temper, and that you are acting as he did, very

foolishly and wickedly. You wonder, probably, that he could dare to feel and to speak, as he did. Others who are looking on when you are angry, wonder in the same way at your feelings and conduct. Remember what the Bible says, *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you with all malice.*

Remember, too, my dear children, that there never can be the least shame or disgrace in doing what God commands us to do, even if things do not turn out as we could wish. And if they should turn out so as greatly to disappoint and perplex us ; to cause us even much trouble and sorrow ; still, if we have been faithful in doing our duty, we ought not to complain. God overrules all things—he will bring good out of evil. Although it may so happen, that, while we have gone forward, and acted in obedience to his commands ; our fellow men may think there is some occasion for ridiculing or despising us : let us feel that their treatment ought to give us no uneasiness, if we have but secured the approbation and favour of God. In a little while both they and we must appear before God, to be judged by him, for all that we have done in this world. Then it will be seen that it was the greatest honour to be employed in any way in the service of God, and that *theirs is the shame*

*and disgrace* who have dared to ridicule those who are thus employed.

Had Jonah thought of these things, and felt as he ought to do; a cheerful acquiescence in all that God did; he would have remained a little longer contented and happy in the city of Nineveh. By remaining there, he would have been of great service to the inhabitants. He could have taught them a great deal about the true God, and their duty towards him, and towards their fellow men. He might have led many of them to become thoroughly changed in their conduct; desirous of forsaking all kinds of wickedness, and of rendering a cheerful obedience to the commands of God.

But Jonah thought and felt very differently. The gentle reproof which he received from God, did not seem to produce its proper effect upon him. He still was disappointed. His pride was not subdued. He could not overcome his shame and mortification, at finding, that the threatenings which he had denounced were not to be executed. He could not remain any longer in the city.

“So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.”

He was hardly willing, after all, to give up the idea, that a great judgment would come

upon Nineveh. They might fall back again into their wickedness, and God still punish them with the entire destruction of their city. Or, if this did not happen, some other kind of evil might overtake them. At any rate, he thought he would wait and see, and know exactly, how God would treat them against whom he had been ordered to denounce so terrible a calamity.

The booth or covering under which Jonah sat, was, probably, a small kind of house, made of the branches and leaves of trees. In that warm climate, he thought this might, perhaps, shelter him. But to make it more comfortable, and, at the same time, to teach him a useful lesson, "God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief."

The learned men who have endeavoured to discover, if possible, what kind of plant this gourd was, are still in doubt with regard to it. We must not think, that it was much like what we call by that name in this country. It was probably more like a small tree, with a slender trunk, thick branches, and large leaves. Such trees are found in that part of the world where Nineveh was situated, and grow up very rapidly, in a short time. But God prepared this particular gourd, on purpose to shelter Jonah, and to refresh him, that he might not sink under the effects of his grief. Its sudden growth was a

miracle ; as you remember the preparation of the great fish was, to swallow up Jonah, when he was cast, by the mariners, into the sea. Jonah saw a great deal to convince him of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God ; and, at this very time, while he was murmuring and complaining, and giving way to sinful anger, he was still, as you see, treated by God with great compassion and kindness. *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Jonah exceeding glad of the gourd.—But God destroys it by a worm.—Jonah suffers greatly from the heat.—He wishes to die.—We should be patient under afflictions.—God expostulates with Jonah.—His wicked reply.—Good men liable to sin.—God reasons with Jonah, to shew him his great selfishness and guilt.—What is *our* spirit ?

It seems that “Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.” It was a great refreshment to him. He delighted in its shelter, and for a moment nearly forgot the cause of his disappointment and vexation. The truth is, *he thought almost wholly about himself, about his character, and what his fellow-men would think and say of him ; about his personal comfort, and how he might be pleasantly seated under the booth, and overshadowed by the thick-leaved gourd, until he should witness the fate of Nineveh.* He thought just then, not at all of the duty of submission to the will of God ; of confidence in his wisdom and goodness ; and in what way he might serve God, and do good to his fellow-men.

Unhappy, sinful, Jonah ! sitting there solitary ; rejoicing exceedingly in the addition to his bodily comfort from the springing up of a single plant ; and yet taking no delight in the



surprising reformation that was going on in Nineveh, and in the mercy of God towards that great city.

May we not expect that he himself will receive some severe chastisement, to bring him back again to a proper state of penitence and humiliation before God? God is, indeed, preparing to chastise him, but yet in a way that shows his great forbearance and long-suffering towards the obstinate and presumptuous prophet.

“But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind: and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.”

God can at any time take away the comforts which he has seen fit to give us. He can do this in ten thousand different ways, and by things which appear to us the weakest and most insignificant. He can accomplish his purposes *even by a worm*, as he did in the case of Jonah.

This little worm, which Jonah could have crushed with his foot, destroyed the life of the refreshing gourd, whose shelter he was enjoying so much,—and it withered. Its branches hung down, and its broad leaves drooped, as if to rebuke the prophet for his selfish and discon-

tented feelings. Besides the loss of this shelter, at the rising of the sun the next day, when the heat begins to increase in that very warm climate, God caused the east wind to blow strongly, and make the heat of the sun still more intolerable.

Travellers tell us of a wind that blows in some of the countries of the eastern part of the world, which is very terrible. The people who live in Arabia call it the Simoon. It comes from across the burning sands of the desert, *like a great hot stream*; and as it approaches, the clouds at a distance are tinged with a red colour, and all the sky looks gloomy and alarming. Coming still nearer, it seems like a sheet of smoke, coloured with purple. The course which it takes is usually less than a hundred feet in width; and it goes so rapidly, that it is not felt in any one spot more than eight or ten minutes.

It always keeps about two feet above the surface of the ground. This enables those persons who see it coming, to save their lives, by instantly throwing themselves flat upon the earth, with their faces downward, and breathing as little as possible till it is past. Camels and other animals, when they perceive it coming, thrust their heads down, and bury their nostrils in the sand. Men, however, are often destroyed by its blast. It comes with such amazing

quickness, that it overtakes them still standing up, before they are aware of it, and they receive its poisonous vapour into their lungs. They fall down directly, and lie without motion or life. It is especially dangerous when it comes in the night. Thousands, it is said, have in more than one instance, perished in a single night from its desolating breath.

A distinguished traveller who visited Mosul, a city on the banks of the Tigris, and near to which it is supposed that Nineveh stood, speaks of this same east wind. He says that it extends its ravages all the way from the end of the gulf of Cambaya, quite up to Mosul.

The same writer tells us, that while he was in Mosul, the heat was so intense, that in the middle of the day there was no stirring out; and even at night, the walls of the houses were so heated by the sun which had shone during the day, as to produce a disagreeable heat to the body, at a foot or even a yard distance from them.

If the heat was any thing like this, at the time when Jonah was sitting under his booth, and withered gourd; and if the vehement east wind that blew over him, was any thing like the Simoom, which I have described to you; it is no wonder that he fainted, and was in great distress. His distress, it seems, was so great, that "he wished in himself to die, and said, it is better for me to die, than to live."

It was very wrong for Jonah to feel so, and to say so. If God thinks it best to deprive us of any comfort, or to send upon us any affliction, we should be submissive to his will, and not murmur or complain. No matter how great our distress is, we should consider that God has some wise and good reason for requiring us to endure it. It is proper, indeed, for us to endeavour to remove it by all lawful means. But if these fail, we should not repine. We should be patient, and let others learn from our example how to submit to the chastisements that our Heavenly Father sees fit to inflict upon us. We should remember, too, that these chastisements are less than our sins deserve,—*a great deal less*;—and that if we make a proper use of them, they will do us good. God intends them for our good, as much so as a kind father intends the punishment which he inflicts upon his disobedient child, for *his good*. It is intended to lead him to see and to feel the folly and guilt of disobedience; and to bring him back to a state of love and respect to his parent, and of a willingness to do cheerfully all that the parent requires of him.

Our afflictions ought in the same way to lead us to humble ourselves before God, in view of our many sinful wanderings from him; and to bring us back again to our Heavenly Father, with feelings of love, of

confidence, and of heart-felt obedience to his will.

Jonah's affliction, which he so richly deserved, ought to have had this effect upon him, but it did not at first seem to do him any good. He felt more wretched and discontented than ever. He had no submission to God. He suffered so much both in body and in mind, that, instead of looking to God for support and deliverance, he longed for death to release him from his troubles.

God saw his repining and unsubdued spirit, and said to him, "Doeſt thou well to be angry for the gourd?" "And he ſaid, I do well to be angry, even unto death."

This was a very insulting and wicked reply for Jonah to make to God. He muſt indeed, have been in a very diſturbed and even furious ſtate of mind, to dare to do it. His rage at the loſs of the gourd inflamed his feelings to ſuch a degree, that he gave way to the worſt paſſions of his heart. He juſtified his own ſinful anger, and declared that it was right for him to be ſo angry, as even to wiſh for death. He did this too, in the preſence of God, and as if to reprove God himſelf for taking away his ſhelter from the tormenting heat.

We ſee from this, and indeed from the whole hiſtory of Jonah, how good men,—thoſe who are truly the friends of God and devoted to his

service,—may be led away, at times, by their remaining sinful passions and desires, from the love and obedience of God, to say and do things as bad as any that the worst persons say and do. The Bible gives us a faithful account of these sins of good men, to teach us *how strong the power of sin is in the human heart*; and how much, even the best persons need to look and pray to God continually, for his wisdom and strength to be given to them, to enable them to overcome their sinful passions and desires. Remember this, my dear children. What Jonah said and did must appear, I think, very strange and wicked to you. Fear, lest at some time, you may imitate his example. Pray earnestly and daily to God, that he would keep you from sinning against him, and under all your afflictions, give you a submissive and patient spirit.

Notwithstanding the very wrong feelings that Jonah continued to indulge, and the insulting and wicked reply which he made, God still treated him with great forbearance; and endeavoured to reason with him, to shew him his folly and his guilt. “Then said the Lord, thou hadst pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madst it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand

persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand ; and also much cattle ? ”

Jonah felt much troubled that the gourd was destroyed by the worm. He pitied it,—he felt sorry, that so beautiful and useful a plant should wither and die. He would have done any thing in his power to preserve it. But what was the gourd, compared with the numerous inhabitants of the city of Nineveh ?

Jonah could feel deeply afflicted at the destruction of a single plant, which he had not caused to grow, or taken the least care of. And shall not God have mercy upon the very beings that he has formed and preserved ?

Jonah would have the gourd spared, which in a single night sprang up and grew to its full height, and in another night perished ;—a short-lived plant, possessing neither thought nor feeling. And shall not God spare the people in the great city of Nineveh ? Are they not of infinitely more value than the gourd ? They will all live for ever. They have never-dying souls. Shall not God show his mercy towards them ; especially as they have humbled themselves before him, and given, (many of them at least,) marks of sincere repentance. This long-suffering of his may lead still more of them to consider the folly and the guilt of their past lives, and to repent of their wickedness, and love and obey God.

Besides, in the city, there are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand. These are young children and infants who are not old enough yet, to understand the difference between right and wrong. For this is what the Jews meant, when they spake of a person *not being able to discern between his right hand and his left hand*. Of such young children and infants, there are no fewer than one hundred and twenty thousand.

By thus knowing the number of young children and infants, we can form an opinion of the whole population of Nineveh; and it is supposed, that the number of inhabitants, of all ages, could not have been less than five hundred thousand. Perhaps it was somewhat more.

Must all these little ones perish, and the innocent cattle too? They, as well as the young children and infants, have had no share in the dreadful wickedness that has been committed in the city. Shall not all these be spared?

Thus did God reason with Jonah, and endeavour to show him how foolish and wicked he was. He could be very greatly displeased and angry at the loss of the gourd, and yet feel not at all for the harmless animals, for the tender and interesting little children in Nineveh. He



could even murmur at the preservation of the city, although there was such an appearance of sincere repentance among the inhabitants, and such an astonishing change in their outward conduct.

Do you think, my dear children, that Jonah acted in a very foolish and wicked manner, and that he had very wrong and sinful feelings. Then, take care, that you do not imitate his example.

Has it never happened, that you have thought, that the good of others would, in some way, make *your enjoyment* less? Have you not sometimes felt so anxious to secure your own happiness, that you have cared nothing about theirs? Have you not even been willing that *they should suffer*, rather than you lose a little of something which you strongly desired to have, or rather than put yourselves to any inconvenience on their account.

This is the same *selfish spirit* which Jonah had; and it shows that if you had been placed in his situation, you would in all probability have felt and acted just as he did.

If you have such a spirit now, my dear children; if any of you have it, and feel no sorrow for indulging it; and do not endeavour to overcome it; and do not pray to God to deliver you from it; it shows very clearly that you are not prepared to go to heaven. If you should

die with such a spirit, you could not go to heaven. For these all have a very different spirit. They have the same spirit that was in Jesus Christ. You know what this spirit was. He so loved us—he so loved all mankind—that he left the happiness and the glory which he had with God in heaven. He was made like one of us. *He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* He was poor, and had no home. He was despised and rejected by his own countrymen, the Jews. He was in such an agony when thinking of the death which he was to suffer for you and for me, that he sweat drops of blood. He was beaten, and reproached, and insulted, and made to wear a painful crown of thorns. He died on the cross, enduring the most dreadful sufferings, both in his body and in his mind.

And all this he did to save you, my dear children, (if you trust in him, and love him, and obey him,) from the terrible punishment in the future world, which is due to your sins.

Have you anything like this spirit of Christ? *Have you begun to feel and to act a little as he did?* Have you *some desire* to do what you can to make others good and happy? Do you love to see them good and happy? Especially, are you willing to give up something that you love; to put yourselves to some inconvenience; *to even endure some suffering*, in order

that in this way you may do good to those around you ?

Ask yourselves these questions, my dear children ; think seriously of them ; and see what the answers will be.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Jonah probably humbled, and again penitent.—Good men always mourn over their sins.—The Bible written for our instruction. What use will the reader make of this history of Jonah?—Concluding exhortations.

THE Bible does not tell us how Jonah felt after God had reasoned with him about his foolish and wicked anger. It is altogether probable, however, that he saw once more, how great a sinner he was; and that he again repented, and implored the forgiveness of God. He doubtless, too, besought God *to give him the Holy Spirit*, that he might have right thoughts and feelings, and be kept from sinning in future.

It was thus that David prayed in the fifty first Psalm, after he had been guilty of great wickedness. Read this psalm, my dear children, and you will see how deeply humble good men feel, if they have forgotten God at any time, and committed sin. They mourn over their sin. They repent of it. They feel how ungrateful they have been to their kind, heavenly Father. They beseech him to have mercy upon them, and for Christ's sake, to pardon their iniquity. They feel how weak they are,

and liable again to yield to temptation, and commit sin. They pray to God *humbly, earnestly, constantly*, that he would give them the Holy Spirit, that they may be kept from sin, and led to love and obey God.

It is thus, my dear children, that you should feel and pray, whenever you forget your duty to God, and yield to temptation, and act wickedly. Have you done so heretofore? You have, doubtless, sinned against God. Perhaps you can recollect, when you felt very much as Jonah did, after the gourd had withered. Did you afterwards think and feel how wrong it was to have such discontented and angry feelings? Did you repent of such wickedness, and humble yourselves before God, and implore his forgiveness? Did you beseech him to keep you from sinning in future?

It is only in this way that we can hope to overcome our sins. The power of sin is very great. You know that often wicked thoughts and feelings arise in your mind, and you are inclined to say or to do wicked things. You know how difficult it is to get rid of these wicked thoughts and feelings. The only way to get rid of them is, to feel humbled in the sight of God that you have them, and that you love to have them; to feel truly sorry that you have them; to feel how wrong it is to have them; to resolve and endeavour to overcome them, and banish

them from your mind ; and, above all, earnestly to beseech God for the sake of Jesus Christ, to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may entirely get rid of them, and have right thoughts and feelings.

It would be very pleasant to us to know something more about the history of Jonah, and where he went after leaving Nineveh. But God has not thought it best to tell us. He has good reasons for all that he does. He directed holy men of old to write the different parts of the Bible, *just as they are written* ; and just as he thought they ought to be written, to do us the most good, if we will study them, and love and obey the truths which they teach us.

From what God has told us about Jonah and the Ninevites, we know enough of their history to teach us a great many useful and important things. Instead, then, of being too curious to know more, let us learn wisdom from what we do know. This is the true use of knowledge. For if you read the histories in the Bible, my dear children, *only to get entertainment from them*, they will do you no good. When you read them, you should remember that they are written on purpose to make you wiser and better. God directed them to be written for *you* ; yes, *for you particularly*. He knew that you would read them ; *when* you would read them ; and *how* you would read them ; whether you would

do it merely to gratify your curiosity by finding something new and entertaining, or to learn from them what your duty is, and how you must love and obey him. *He sees you* when you read them, or while they are read to you. He looks into your minds, and into your hearts, and knows exactly how you think and feel; and whether you wish to make a good use of what he is so kind to give you for your instruction in the Bible.

You will have at the day of judgment, to render an account to God of the use which you make of *this instruction*. What use have you made—what use do you hope still to make—*of the history of Jonah*? While hearing it, have you only had your curiosity gratified by its strange and wonderful events? Have you listened to it in the same way that you often listen to stories which are told you for your amusement? Or, have you felt as we have gone along, and seen the great wickedness both of Jonah and the Ninevites, and the dreadful destruction that was very near overtaking them, *how great an evil sin is*,—and how much you have to dread the displeasure of God, if you continue sinning against him, without repenting of it, and forsaking it? Have you considered, too, from the example both of Jonah and the Ninevites, *how great the mercy of God is towards the penitent*; how willing he is to spare them, to

pardon them ; yes, to receive them to his favour and love, and to be their everlasting friend ; if they will but turn unto him from their wickedness, and be willing to submit to his authority, and to do what he requires of them ? And have you felt how much *you need this mercy of God* ? How great is his goodness, in thus being ready to *pardon you*, if you will truly turn unto him from all *your wickedness*, and repent, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you ? Has this wonderful goodness of God led you to feel sorry for all your past ingratitude towards him, and brought you to a humble, penitent, and obedient state of mind ?

You alone can answer these questions, my dear children. Answer them now ; answer them truly to your own consciences. Remember that it was *the immediate repentance* of the Ninevites which God regarded with favour ; and that on that account alone he was merciful to them. Had they said that they would repent at some future time, when it might be more agreeable or convenient for them to do it, God would not have had compassion on them. The judgment that Jonah threatened against them, would certainly have been inflicted.

If you have never yet repented of your sins, and trusted in Christ to save you, no longer delay to do it. How unwise the Ninevites would have been to delay *their* repentance ! How



unwise you will be to delay *yours* ! A future time for repentance may never come. Each day that you put it off, may render you more unwilling to do it the following day. Days will succeed to days, and weeks to weeks, and months to months, and years to years ; and while you keep on sinning, *loving other things more and more, but not loving God at all*, you will find repentance becoming more and more difficult. Your heart will become hardened in sin, and God may abandon you, as he has done other impenitent sinners, to the guilt and to the ruin which you yourselves have chosen.

But years may not succeed to years, nor months to months, nor weeks to weeks, nor days to days. You know not how soon you may die. Many children younger than you are, have been laid in the cold and silent grave. There *you* may soon be laid, then it will be too late to repent and trust in Christ. God makes no offers of mercy to you beyond the grave.

You see the danger and folly of delay, my dear children. Avoid this danger and folly ; seek the mercy of God through Christ ; confess your sins to God ; beseech him for the sake of Christ, to pardon you, and to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may love him with all your heart. Then you will be safe. *God will be your everlasting friend. Christ will be your Saviour from the punishment and the power of*

*sin. The Holy Spirit will be your teacher and comforter. While you live, you will enjoy the highest happiness that can be enjoyed in this world, the happiness, that arises from loving and serving God, and doing good to others.*

You will not be afraid to die, and when your body goes to mingle with the dust, your soul will take its flight to heaven, there to be free for ever, from all pain, and sorrow, and sin ; and to go on without end, in becoming more and more like God, *like that being whose knowledge, and holiness, and happiness are infinite.* To be like such a being ; to spend an eternity in enjoying his presence and love ; in worshipping and serving him ; in communion with his Son, the Saviour of your soul, and with an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect ; *of what higher bliss can you conceive,—what greater can you desire ?*

Go, quickly go, to Him who will impart  
His grace to every humble contrite heart.  
Go in *His name*, whose wond'rous cross doth prove,  
Stronger than death itself, *His matchless love.*  
Go penitential, on the suppliant knee,  
*Ask and receive, and blest for ever be.*

THE END.

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